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TO LHASSA AT LAST

LHASA. From a photograph.

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TO LHASSA AT LAST

BY

POWELL MILLINGTON

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'IN CANTONMENTS' 'IN AND BEYOND CANTONMENTS'
ETC.

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WITH A FRONTISPIECE

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE
1905

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PREFACE

When the Sikkim–Tibet Mission Force marched to Lhassa, it carried along with it, besides fighting men and diplomatists, a strong contingent that represented literature and the deeper sciences. We were full of brains in that Lhassa column. There were men in it who had made the subject of Tibet their own before they had set foot in the country, and were already qualified to discourse upon it, whether in its political, its topographical, its ethnological, or its archæological aspect. There was a man who came with us armed only with a bicycle wheel and a cyclometer, with which he has corrected all preconceived notions of Tibetan distances. There was a man with a hammer (the

'Martol Walah Sahib' the natives called him), who, if his pony stumbled over a stone, got off his pony and beat the stone with his hammer, not really vindictively but merely to find out what precious ore the stone might contain. Then there was a man with a butterfly-net, who pickled the flies that got into his eye, and chased those that did not with his butterfly-net and pickled them also. There was a man too with a trowel, who did a lot of useful weeding by the roadside. There was a committee too of licensed curio-hunters, who collected curios with much enterprise and scientific precision for the British Museum. Lastly, there was a select band of press correspondents, who threw periodical literary light on our proceedings from start to finish.

Who can doubt that all the above-named are not now, in this month of November 1904, writing for their lives, so as to produce at the earliest opportunity the results of their scientific or literary labours in the shape of books that

will give valuable information to the serious student, or prove a substantial contribution to literature?

Apart from the above enterprises, a flood of Blue-books, compiled by the authorised political and military officials, will doubtless also shortly appear, even though that appearance may in some cases be but a swift transference from the printing-press to the pigeon-hole.

Surely, then, for one who is not ordered by authority to compile a Blue-book, who has no gospel of Tibetan scientific discoveries to proclaim to the world, and who has no harvest—in the shape of letters previously sent to the press and capable of republication—ready at hand for reaping, to sit down and write a book on Tibet, merely because he happens to have been to Lhassa and back, is a work of supererogation which needs a word of apology.

My apology is that this book will be avowedly a book by a 'man in the street'—a

man, that is, who occupied an inconspicuous single-fly tent in a back street of the brigade camp. As such it will throw no searching light upon the subject, but may afford a simple but distinctive view of it, and one uncaught by the searchlights of the official minute, the scientist's lore, and the war correspondent's art.

But, my prospective reader, as you finger this slight volume at the bookstall, I trust that this preface may at once catch your eye, so that, if what you want to read about Tibet is an elaborate appreciation or a collection of solid information, you may drop the book like the proverbial hot potato before that jealous-eyed man behind the stall makes you buy it as a punishment for fingering it, and may seize instead upon one of those weightier tomes that are now racing it through the press.

POWELL MILLINGTON.

November 1904.

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LHASSA. (From a photograph) . . . *Frontispiece*
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TO LHASSA AT LAST

CHAPTER I

THE WRITING ON THE WALL

'AIN'T this ripping?' said I to my wife.

'Yes, delightful,' she said.

It really was rather nice. It had been quite hot in the plains, and was pleasantly cool up here. My wife and family had preceded me and had been settled for some weeks in the house which we had taken in the hills for the hot weather, and now I had just arrived on two months' leave. We were sitting over the fire in the drawing-room after dinner, a cosy little room made homelike by a careful selection of draperies

and ornaments from the larger drawing-room in the plains.

'Just ripping,' I repeated with sad lack of originality. The ride up the hill from the plains had been fatiguing. The fire was soporific. There was whiskey and soda at my elbow and a cheroot in my mouth (I'm a privileged husband and smoke in the drawing-room).

'Ripping,' I said for the third time, half dozing.

'Come, get up, lazy-bones, and go to bed. You are hopeless as you are.'

So I was led to bed. We put out the lamps, and on the hall table found our bedroom candles, which we lit preparatory to climbing the stairs. The staircase set me musing. Some hill houses have them, but they are rare in the plains. The smallness of the rooms, the existence of that narrow staircase, the domestic process of lighting the bedroom candles, the necessity of not waking the baby, the sense of security and

of being cut adrift even temporarily from the ties of officialdom—all suggested the peaceful conditions of life enjoyed by the small but solid householder at home.

'We've got it at last,' I exclaimed.

'Got what?' asked my wife.

'Why, the life of the bank clerk at home,' I replied; 'that bank clerk whom we have always envied, who lives at Tooting in a little house just like this, with a creaking staircase just like this, who never gets harried from pillar to post, who is peaceful and domestic, and gets fat as soon as he can afford to. And here I am, for two months at any rate, and I'm living in a Tooting villa just like the bank clerk, and in the bosom of my family, and I'm going to get fat too.'

So up we went to bed, full of peace. There was a big black centipede crawling on the bedroom wall, a sinister-looking object, looking on the white surface like mysterious handwriting, bringing with it to the fanciful mind suggestions of 'Mene, Mene, Tekel,

Upharsin.' My wife has a horror of centipedes. I was at once detailed to destroy it: a feat soon accomplished.

'That dispels the bank clerk idea altogether, does it not?' one of us remarked to the other. 'Bank clerks at Tooting don't have centipedes on their bedroom walls, do they?'

When I had gone to my dressing-room, I heard the sound below of a key turning in a lock. It was a servant opening the back door.

A moment later I heard the tread of the servant's bare feet on the stairs. This was unusual. My bearer does not voluntarily visit me at this hour.

Yes, it was the bearer. He came to the dressing-room door and presented me with a telegram. It was 'urgent,' as denoted by the yellow colour of the envelope. 'Urgent' telegrams when addressed to officers on leave are apt to involve some interference with their plans.

I read the telegram and signed the receipt.

The servant asked if he was wanted any more. 'Yes, very much wanted,' I answered; 'but go downstairs now and I'll call you later.'

Then came the process of breaking the news to my wife. It is difficult not to be clumsy on these occasions. I went into the bedroom with the telegram concealed somewhere on my person. There she sat unconcerned, and I had to break it to her and did not know how to begin. I got to within a foot or two of her and then stopped, held out a beckoning hand to her, and said roughly:

'Come here.'

'What is it?' she said, sitting transfixed. There was something in my face which alarmed her.

I beckoned again, and again said, 'Come here.'

'Oh!' she cried, 'take it off, take it off! It must be a centipede on my shoulder that you are pointing at. I know it must be.'

'No, dear, it's not half so bad as that: it's only that I'm ordered to Tibet.'

CHAPTER II

PRELIMINARIES

THE next day was Sunday—not a good day on which to start preparations. I had a great many things to do. The first was to visit the civil surgeon, and be examined for fitness for residing in high altitudes. He lived at the top of a steep hill himself, and as I arrived there on foot but active, he passed me without difficulty. Then my pony who had come with me had to be despatched with the syce on two double marches to the railway terminus. Then I had to procure free railway passes from the station staff officer, whose office, the day being Sunday, was of course closed. There was also the putting of oneself, on the one hand, and one's wife

and family on the other, on sound financial bases, preparatory to an indefinite period of separation. There was also a lot of sorting and packing to be done, and farewell visits to be made, where these were officially expected of one. (One's real friends, of course, one left without a thought.)

I got off on the Monday. People at home are often horror-struck at the speed with which the married officer has to leave his family when ordered on service. Fond parents have been known to forbid their daughters marrying soldiers on this very account. They are quite wrong. Given that you have to separate, it is much better to get the separation over as quickly as possible. In this case the speed with which those busy thirty-six hours passed between the receipt of the telegram and my departure was a real godsend. A long-drawn-out anticipation of separation would by comparison have been intolerable.

My wife came to the top of the road

that leads to the plains to see me off. The quickest mode of conveyance was the 'rickshaw.' There ought to be some glamour of romance about a wife seeing her husband off to the wars, but how could there be when the husband started in a rickshaw? I stepped solemnly into the vehicle, and an officious 'jampani' tried to tuck me up with a rug as though I had been something very dainty and precious, while my wife, who still preserves a critical eye for Indian manners and customs, exclaims :—

'Oh dear, oh dear, this is a funny country, when one's husband starts for field service in a perambulator!'

The rickshaw carried me at break-neck pace to the plains, where, with my ears singing from the sudden drop of 6,000 feet, and the heat oppressing me, I took train to my former station, to which I had to make a detour before proceeding to the base.

It was a terrible two days that I had here. Dismantling a furnished house, packing and

warehousing your household gods, paying your outstanding bills, having parting drinks at your friends' expense, giving certificates of saintly character to every black man who has ever served you in any capacity during the past two years, and who drops from the clouds for his 'chitthi' as soon as your final departure from the station becomes known, sorting, repairing, and supplementing your camp kit, fitting out yourself, your servant, and your horse with warm clothing—these and countless other matters filled to the brim those forty-eight hours.

At last I was in the train for Calcutta. I met two major-generals of my acquaintance at different points during the journey. They both congratulated me warmly on the quest upon which I was going, each independently remarking, not upon the unexampled professional experience that I was likely to acquire, but on the fact that Tibet was an A1 place for curios! Nice and human of them, I thought, to put that first! One of

them, I fear, was rather incommoded by the numerous articles of kit which I had with me in the carriage, and which overflowed somewhat into his portion of it. He was, I knew, a great authority on the scientific reduction of transport, and, when I apologised somewhat sheepishly for crowding him, made some grim remark about the liberal scale of baggage per officer that was doubtless being allowed to us; so I had to impress upon him that I stood an even chance of being kept at the base, and so had to be prepared for all emergencies, even a ten days' leave to Darjiling. Whereat he smiled more grimly than ever.

Don't travel from Northern India to Calcutta in May, if you can help it. It is not very hot when you start, but every mile you travel you find it growing hotter. You get baked as you traverse the dry plains of the United Provinces, you get fried as you reach a greasier climate further South, and in the humid atmosphere of Lower Bengal

the sensation is that of being boiled. You get out of the train in Howrah station at Calcutta done all to shreds.

After a few hours in Calcutta I took the Darjiling mail train which was due the following morning at Siliguri, the latter being the base of the Tibet Expedition. In the train I was accompanied by a throng of Calcutta folk going up to Darjiling for their 'week-end.' Calcutta, apart from other attributes, is a great emporium of drapery and millinery goods, and it was quite natural to find myself sharing a carriage with a gentleman who in the course of conversation revealed himself as the head of a large firm of haberdashers. He was a delightful travelling companion, and regaled me with tales illustrative of the humorous side of his business. He was at his best when describing his most successful corset fitter, a damsel blessed apparently both with a slim waist and a strong arm. With the former she advertised the latest thing in corsets, and

with the latter she fitted the said corset on to figures less graceful than her own. All went well till one day she surpassed herself by transforming a certain stately matron into a veritable sylph. This lady went home pleased and proud, but in an hour's time an indignant letter accompanied by the fragments of a corset reached the manager, the letter demanding the return of the money expended on the corset, on the ground that the latter, on the wearer having cleared her throat with a gentle cough, had burst in several places with a loud report.

But just then the train steamed into Siliguri station, and I had to leave my friend and his pleasant tales of frills and furbelows and plunge into war, bloody war.

CHAPTER III

THE BASE

I HAVE been too long describing the preliminaries that were necessary before joining the Expedition, but there is some excuse for doing so. For after all those preliminaries, with their suddenness and their hurry and rush, were distinctly typical of the Indian Frontier Expedition. When soldiers serving the Imperial Government are ordered on a campaign, they generally have some warning. Foreign politics have generally been simmering in the pot for some time before the pot overboils. But on the Indian Frontier some irresponsible ruffians perpetrate some sudden outrage, which, without any word of warning, involves the instant

despatch of troops to the scene of action. The result is a scramble, an individual example of which I have tried above to describe.

In all books on wars a constant comparison will be found drawn between the schoolboy and the soldier on service. I dare say I shall find myself working that comparison to death. It occurred to me first as I reached Siliguri, and, jostling with other fellows, rushed to the Staff Office there, to discover what was my next destination. We felt like schoolboys, who, at the beginning of term, rush to inquire whether they have given us our remove, or who anxiously await the publication of the notice which will tell them whether they are to represent their house at football. There was the same excitement before we learnt our fate. There was that boyish jubilation on the part of those who were off to the front, and vulgar schoolboy language from those who were to be detained at the base or in Sikkim.

My orders were to go to Gnatong as a temporary measure. This was dubious, and might mean being stuck there or in a similar place indefinitely, or might mean being eventually sent forward. Those who knew it told me that Gnatong was a horrible place, that it snowed there daily from October 1 till May 31, and rained from June 1 to September 30, that it was always in the clouds, and that it was approached by a stony road, as steep as the side of a house, which would knock one's pony's feet to bits. The height of the place was twelve thousand odd feet, and it was situated in Sikkim some ten miles on the near side of the Tibetan frontier.

I had to wait some days at Siliguri till my pony and some of my kit, which the railway authorities had not let travel as fast as I had, should catch me up.

There were several detached officers also waiting here, and the units forming the reinforcements were coming in daily. We turned half the refreshment room into a sort

of station mess, having our meals at one long table. I suppose a contemplative person would have noted those accidental details which differentiated us from the ordinary travellers by the Darjiling–Calcutta mails, who had their meals at the other long table. There we were, the brutal and licentious soldiery feasting and drinking and gambling with shameless *abandon*, while those worthy men of affairs from Calcutta and their excellent ladies took their meals hastily and in sober earnest alongside of us. Some of us must have presented a queer spectacle. I remember in particular one youthful officer, whom I afterwards lost sight of, but who was the most ardent young Napoleon I have met for a long time. He had apparently started growing his beard the day he left his cantonment. He was of the Esau type, and the growth was brisk. The colour was ginger, not the chastened sort that is sprinkled over with sugar, but the crude dark ginger you get in jars. He affected short khaki shorts,

as suitable for the soldier in hill warfare. He also affected a khaki cardigan jacket. He had left his helmet behind him, and wore only a khaki pugree with a khaki 'kula' in the centre of it. I used to see ladies, who came in for a quiet cup of tea, glancing sidelong at him. Some were doubtless impressed, and went away enthusiastic about that young warrior. But in the eyes of others I fancy I saw a twinkle.

At last my pony with his syce and the missing kit arrived, and I was enabled to start for Gnatong the next day.

CHAPTER IV

TO GNATONG

I MARCHED to Gnatong as a passenger—that is to say, though I accompanied troops, I yet did no duty with them. The camping grounds *en route* were small clearings in the jungle, so small that not more than two or three hundred men and two or three hundred animals could be encamped at any one spot on a given day. Hence the reinforcements were marching up in very small columns. It was one of these which I accompanied as far as Gnatong.

About two or three days' marching takes you out of India into Sikkim, but you are in the heart of the jungle almost as soon as you leave Siliguri. For about seven days

you hardly rise at all, merely following the course upstream of the Teesta river, and later on of one of its tributaries.

That belt of 'terai' jungle which fringes the skirt of the whole Himalayan range has its own special charms. It is a fine sporting country for those who are on pleasure bent and are mounted on elephants, on which alone is it possible to penetrate the thick breast-high undergrowth. Even for troops marching along a road running through its midst, it has a certain fascination. The incessant call of the jungle-fowl on either side of you, the constant shade, so unusual in India, the bright orchids in the tree-tops, the heavy luxuriance of vegetation that loads the air with scents that are generally sweet, the gorgeous butterflies, the steamy hothouse atmosphere—all combine to form a kind of sedative, suggestive of the lotus-flower, of pleasant physical enervation, and perpetual afternoon. One could enjoy this feeling as one sat idly on one's pony, till it was dis-

pelled by the rain. It rained very heavily all those days. Even when it did not rain the air was so laden with moisture that the very clothes you wore were always wet on the outside. The rain too was of the sort that did not cool or stir the air; the thermometer stood perpetually at a high figure, and existence on the inside of a mackintosh during one of those showers was a protracted torture of prickly heat.

We reached Rangpo—the town that lies on the border of independent as opposed to British Sikkim—after four days' marching. I call it a town, for it certainly possessed one street and a bazaar, and swarmed with natives other than those belonging to the force. The ordinary native of Sikkim seems to be a half-breed, looking partly Aryan, partly Mongolian, and less Aryan and more Mongolian as one penetrates further into the country. Their women are rather picturesque. They do not give you quite the same cheery unblushing greeting as you

generally get from the regular hill woman of Mongolian type, but they do not hide their faces jealously from you, like the women on the plains of India. In dress they largely affect black velveteen. It would be interesting to know from where that velveteen comes, though I think it could, like the iridescent shawls and the stocking suspenders that are so largely worn by the brave men of Bengal, be traced to Manchester or Birmingham. It must have been an enterprising bagman who first went round Sikkim and persuaded the Sikkimese ladies that black velveteen was the match *par excellence* for their complexions.

At length we began to climb a little, ever so little, and after two more days reached Lingtam in pouring rain. This was the last of our level going; from here to Gnatong we were to climb continuously, and at as steep a gradient as laden mule with straining breast-piece could hope to tackle. The Lingtam camp was even smaller, more uneven,

and damper than the others had been. I found a convenient difficulty arising as to where my tent could be fitted in, and simultaneously heard of the existence of a bungalow at Sedonchan, three miles beyond. I was tied by no duty to the column, so determined to reach Sedonchan that afternoon, and push on to Gnatong the next day.

Those three miles to Sedonchan involved a climb of four thousand feet, up a rough dripping bridle-path paved with cobbles, not nice smooth-rounded cobbles, but roughly cut spiky stones. I have said the path was paved with cobbles, but should have added that it had a supplementary pavement of horse-shoes.

At first in my ignorance I thought of picking one up for luck, but a yard ahead I saw another one, and then met others at close intervals all the way, so decided that all that good fortune could not be meant for me, and had better be left well alone.

It was a good farrier who could so shoe a horse that he would lose no shoe between Lingtam and Gnatong.

I don't know in the least what sort of place Sedonchan may be. It rained all the time, some fourteen hours, that I stayed there, and was shrouded in mist. So that if I ever went there again the place would still possess the charm of novelty.

The next morning I found that my pony had shared the lot of most animals along that road and cast a shoe. Farriers don't grow on the wayside in Sikkim, so there was no alternative but to walk up to Gnatong. This involved a climb of about six thousand feet, and then a drop into Gnatong of about one thousand. I overtook the Royal Fusiliers during my walk; they had camped for the night in a puddle called Jaluk which lies half-way between Sedonchan and Gnatong. It was during this march of theirs that I believe the following dialogue was overheard:—

'What-ho, Bill!' said Atkins No 1. 'What do they mean by calling this something country a something tableland? 'Tain't no something tableland, this 'ere ain't.'

'Garrn,' answered Atkins No. 2, 'it's a something tableland right enough, and this 'ere as we are climbing is the something legs of the something table.'

Fill in the adjectives to taste, or *à la* Mr. Kipling, and you get the real flavour of the dialogue.

CHAPTER V

MOUNTAIN SICKNESS: GNATONG: WAYSIDE WITTICISMS

THOSE ailments which are described by the word sickness, joined to a prefix, are of two kinds. Either the prefix is the cause of the disease, as in the case of sea sickness, or the expression is a *lucus a non lucendo*, as in the case of 'home sickness,' the cause of the sickness being in the latter case the exact contradictory of the prefix. Sometimes the two kinds are combined, as in the case of love sickness, when both love itself and also the lack of love are the simultaneous cause of the disorder.

Mountain sickness, on the other hand, may be of either kind, though not of both at

once. I have often had bad mountain sickness of the one kind in the plains of India. Any one who has spent his boyhood scampering over Scotch hills or similar pastimes is peculiarly prone to this form of the disease towards the end of a hot June. Ten days' leave, or more if possible, is then the only remedy. I had never experienced the other form till I reached Gnatong. I don't exactly know how doctors describe it in diagnosis. I believe, though, that they attribute it in some way to your blood not running up the hill as fast as you do yourself, which results in blood collecting in your toes, which ought to be running about your brain and lungs. Hence giddiness, nausea, headache, loss of appetite, insomnia, difficulty in breathing, and, saddest of all in some cases, an utter inability to enjoy either your drink or your tobacco.

I got it badly with all the symptoms, including the last two. I was supposed to be very busy helping to see each column

onwards. They were got through without difficulty—no one would stay at Gnatong an hour longer than he could help. So I suppose I performed my share of the work all right, though it was done from bed. There was no one there to supervise my work, and I therefore did not have to go upon the sick list; but even so the feeling of being incapacitated by some accidental ailment at the beginning of an expedition, and of its possibly preventing you from reaching the front, is one of the most trying of ordeals.

The number of victims of mountain sickness at Gnatong was considerable. There was an enterprising Parsi merchant who had opened a store there. His wealth of tinned provisions and whiskey lay in the shop comparatively disregarded, but he did a roaring trade in phenacetin and Stearne's headache cure among the mountain sick.

Mountain sickness is like measles. If you get a really good go of it, you are not likely to be soon attacked again by it, even

though you have to ascend to an altitude far higher than that at which you originally succumbed. Many a man lay gasping for several days at Gnatong, which was only twelve thousand odd feet up, and later on climbed the Karo-Là (16,800 feet) on his own flat feet, smiling.

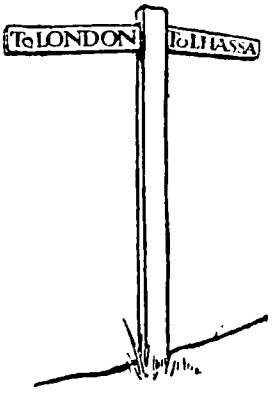
'The last long streak of snow' was just fading as I reached Gnatong at the end of May. It was not very cold, but bitterly raw and damp. I occupied a hut, which contained a fireplace, and would have made myself cosy and warm if the fire had not always smoked. This involved that distressing dilemma between having a fire and also a roomful of smoke, which had to be periodically emptied by opening the door and window, and so letting in cold and rain and mist, or sitting in a chilly damp atmosphere without a fire, but, on the other hand, without either smoke or violent draughts. This is a petty detail, but I mention it, since to the many people who spent their time mainly in

posts on the line of communication, and lived in huts, this must have been an ever-recurring dilemma and a primary feature of their existence.

Gnatong had been an important place during the last Sikkim Expedition. For the purposes of the present Expedition it has been renovated. The men so employed had been merry fellows, with eyes for that nice, innocent, feeble, but well-meant joke, which you appreciate on service, even though in peace time you might elect to be bored by it. These hut builders and road makers had been lavish of sign-posts. The Gnatong post was placarded everywhere on the inside with the names of its tiny streets. It appeared that we were occupying what was on the whole a straggling but quite a fashionable part of London. I myself lived at 'Hyde Park Corner.' The post commandant, if I remember right, occupied a mansion in 'Carlton Gardens.' We went for constitutionals up and down 'Rotten Row,' and

found 'Buckingham Palace' used as a supply depot.

This art of writing mildly amusing notice-boards was not confined to Gnatong. On a bit of the military road near Chumbi, where the roadmakers had to revet it carefully to prevent it falling into the river, there was a neat little sign-board describing this strip of roadway as 'The Embankment.' Outside the dâk bungalow at Rangpo was a large placard on which was printed 'Mount Nelson Hotel. No Ragging allowed.' On the top of the Natu-Là—one of the passes dividing Sikkim from Tibet—there is the following:



Poor jokes all of them, aren't they? but just as poor fare can be eaten with a relish after a hard day's marching; so poor jokes tickle the mental palate of the simple soldier and the stupid officer on service, just as effectively as do good ones.

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CHAPTER VI

OVER THE JALAP-LÀ : CHUMBI : BEARDS

AFTER a week of Gnatong I was ordered to Chumbi, where the reinforcements and a portion of the old force had been concentrating preparatory to what is officially described as 'the second advance to Gyantse.'

My way lay through Kapap over the Jalap-Là, and down through Langram and Rinchingong, and thence to Chumbi. The *pièce de résistance* was the part between Kapap and Langram. There is an easy uninteresting pass between Gnatong and Kapap. Kapap itself looked a bleak dismal spot, lying all in the clouds at the end of a long dark lake. From here you rise to the

top of the Jalap-Là, which is about 14,900 feet high. The suffix 'Là' denotes a 'pass.' There was snow on the pass which covered the road in some places. I got into a small drift once, my pony flopping down suddenly till his girths were in the snow. He knew nothing about snow in those days, and must have been very much astonished. One's first acquaintance with so high an altitude impresses one greatly. There is something so strange about the atmosphere that one feels as though one were in another planet. The effect of the atmosphere on distances is most curious. You see the details of a hill in the distance so clearly that it seems far nearer than it is. Distance-judging by eye for military purposes in high altitudes is an art governed by rules entirely different from those that govern it at an ordinary elevation.

I was a bit weak after my attack of mountain sickness, and stuck to my pony's back the whole way. I felt a natural anxiety with regard to the native followers

who accompanied me—an orderly, a syce, and a bearer. They were all three plainsmen. Hills of any size whatever were quite strange to them. Whether they would live at the height of Mont Blanc was a question of some moment. I expected at any time to see one or other of them lying down gasping like a freshly caught fish. I think they all died in imagination many times before they reached the top of the pass. They turned wild eyes of anguish and reproach towards me whenever I waited to see how they were getting on. Eventually I found it best to leave them to themselves, and only know that they arrived down the far side alive, but expressing a poor opinion of Tibet as a country (for we now were in Tibet).

The walk down to Langram was trying to the toes, but brought us off the bare mountain tops and into a region of pine-woods, the very smell of which is always comforting. Here I stopped the night, descending next morning to Rinchingong,

which is in the Chumbi valley, and stands barely over 9,000 feet. Two miles above Rinchingong we had passed Yatun, the frontier Tibetan village built against that Chinese wall which stretched as a barrier right across the valley, but has since been demolished by British dynamite. Here, besides the dwellings of some Tibetan inhabitants, were the houses of the British official who controls the Chinese customs in this direction, and of Miss Annie Taylor, the lady missionary who has worked for long, and all alone, among the Tibetans of the border, nursing them in sickness, and telling them of Christianity. 'Ani' is Tibetan for nun, and the name 'Ani memsahib' has therefore a double signification to those who use it.

The first glimpse of a building on the north side of the Jalap-Là proclaims the fact that you are no longer in India or under the influence of Indian ideals of domestic or other architecture. The houses in the

Chumbi valley are not, however, as typically Tibetan as those further north, being far more Chinese in appearance. It is, in fact, curious that Chinese influence seems more prevalent in the Chumbi valley than in any other part of Eastern Tibet, except Lhassa itself. The number of Chinamen actually resident in the Chumbi valley is itself large, and there seems to have been a great deal of inter-marriage here at one time or another between the local Tibetans and Chinamen proper, the women of such unions having of course been Tibetan, since the Chinaman, when he goes roaming, invariably, I believe, leaves his women folk at home.

The following day brought me into Chumbi. It was pleasant to be in a big camp again, to join a large mess, and get the latest news from headquarters.

The valley itself was a delightful spot to have reached. After the unpleasantnesses of those heights that one had traversed, this valley seemed a sheer Garden of Eden. It

was a place to dally in, in which to wander about accompanied by your best girl, picking wild flowers for her, and listening with her to the humming of the bees, and the bubbling of laughing brooks, rather than a place in which to concentrate an army for an advance into the enemy's country.

Chumbi would make a glorious summer sanitarium for British troops in the hot weather, provided that that projected route, which is to avoid the passes and run through Bhutan to the Bengal Duars, ever becomes an accomplished fact. Two thousand feet higher than most hill stations, and yet below the really giddy heights, in a climate no hotter at any time than an English summer, never parched with drought and never visited by protracted spells of rain, not perched on an inconvenient hilltop away from its water supply, but lying in a fertile valley, through which runs a river of pure water that knows not the germ of enteric, with enough flat spaces to hold commodious barracks and to

provide good recreation grounds, it seems that it would prove an altogether desirable haven for the invalid soldiers from Calcutta and the Presidency district.

A week spent here was pleasant enough, enabling one, so to speak, to recover one's breath after descending from those heights we had left behind and before tackling those in front. I soon learnt, with the same school-boy jubilation to which I have previously alluded, that I was to accompany the advance.

Here, of course, at this rendezvous of troops many old friends ran across one another. It was sometimes difficult for two friends to recognise each other on account of the obstacles to recognition formed by their respective beards. The soldier's service beard, in its various forms and aspects, forms an interesting study. There is, of course, the ordinary dull beard grown by an adequately but not outrageously hirsute person and trimmed to a conventional shape, which

makes the wearer resemble any such normal being as a naval officer, a parson, or respectable middle-aged civilian of everyday life. The only striking feature of this beard is that it is productive of unexpected likenesses. You have, for instance, known a brother officer for many years, and never found him possessed of any of the glamour of royalty; you meet him on service wearing his beard, and find he is the veritable double of the Prince of Wales.

But there are other beards. There is, for instance, what may be called the 'Infant prodigy' beard, a monstrosity adorning the chin of a quite youthful officer. The latter may be put to serve under you. And it takes time and much hardening of yourself against external influences before you have the effrontery to order the young gentleman about, or tell him off when he is in error. I remember an instance of a fairly senior captain calling on a regimental mess and being entertained during his visit by the only officer

of that regiment then present. The latter possessed an 'Infant prodigy' beard, which was also flecked with a few abnormal grey hairs. I was in that mess too at the moment —in the capacity of honorary member only— and followed the interview with relish. The senior captain was becomingly deferential, and the youngster's grey beard wagged with what appeared becoming dignity. At last a light was brought in by a servant, for it was growing dark, which flashed for a moment on Mr. Greybeard's shoulder strap, and revealed two simple subaltern's stars. The gradual, almost imperceptible, change in the senior captain's manner, and the corresponding falling from his high estate of Mr. Greybeard were interesting to watch. The former soon got up to go.

'Damn that fellow! I mistook him for the colonel,' is what I am sure he said to himself when he got outside.

Then there is what may be called the 'British workman' beard—that is, the beard

which is allowed to grow in its own sweet way, and may adopt any of the sizes or shapes that one sees on the faces of such British workmen as never visit a barber. This type also is productive of strange likenesses, not to public personages or one's own compeers, but to the men of the British working class whom one has known in old days. There were many officers so adorned who made excellent gamekeepers or gillies, and in particular I remember a certain stalwart major whose beard grew in two inverted horns that splayed outwards on his chest, and who was the very image of my father's old gardener. I once very nearly addressed him as 'Horton' by mistake, for that happened to have been the gardener's name.

CHAPTER VII

TO PHARI

THE 'second advance' began in due course. The first few camping grounds were small, so that we had to proceed on the three days' march to Phari in several columns, two columns a day leaving Chumbi together, but halting at separate camping grounds on the way up, and meeting again at Phari.

This march to Phari was, until we actually reached the Phari plain, quite the wettest I have known. It rained incessantly. The first day we climbed a few miles up to Lingmatam. (How like one another the names of places in this part of the world are! It took me months to distinguish between Lingtam, Langram, and Lingmatam.) From

Lingmatam (a sopping, spongy, flat little plain nestling in the hills, that had obviously only just missed its proper vocation of being a lake instead of a plain) we marched up a rough bridle-path through pine-woods to Dhota. We had a very long train of pack-mule transport in our column, and the checks up that steep narrow winding path were interminable, while rain fell the whole time. Whenever anything went wrong with a mule's load, which of course happened frequently owing to the steepness and roughness of the track, it was impossible to take the mule aside to adjust the load, for there was no room at the side, and the mule had to be halted where he was till the adjustment was completed. This involved the halting of say five hundred mules, who happened to be behind the mule who had first been halted. And when the latter at last moved off, it of course took an appreciable interval of time before the next mule followed suit. Multiply that appreciable interval by the number of

mules in the rear, say five hundred, and you find that it takes perhaps a full half-hour before the five-hundredth is at last on the move again. Thus that initial adjustment of a refractory load has cost the rear of the column half an hour's delay, and by the end of the half-hour you may be sure that the load of another mule has got loose, and the whole process has to be repeated. This is just an instance of the trials of a transport officer, and of his faithful servants, the transport driver and the pack-mule.

I remember, during one such check, being seated on my pony at a point of the road where it was impossible to dismount for lack of space, with one mule's head buried in my pony's tail and another mule's tail flicking my pony's nose, the rain trickling off my helmet and down my neck, and, worst of all, a strong aroma rising from the khud beneath where lay the remains of a mule who had met his death at that spot at a date that was palpably neither very recent nor yet innocuously

remote. To be bound almost literally hand and foot in the vicinity of a bad smell is a form of torture which in its way gives points to any inquisition.

Dhota lies at a considerable height above Lingmatam, and, before we reached camp, many of the mule drivers were somewhat exhausted with their climb. There was a certain amount of almost inevitable straggling on the part of some of them—a most unfortunate occurrence, for it resulted in a few leaving their mules to their own devices just when the control of the latter was most necessary. For after emerging from the pine forest a few miles below Dhota we came on to a hillside on which grew ever so little of the deadly aconite plant. A check would occur somewhere to the column. Those mules who were left standing without their drivers would—as is the nature of the beast—try to improve the shining hour by picking up a little grazing from the roadside. Here and there a mule would swallow

some aconite, and the chances were that before he reached camp he would foam at the mouth and quickly expire. A few, though poisoned, reached camp alive, and of these a small proportion were saved by drastic remedies. But the deaths that day from aconite poisoning almost reached double figures—a regrettable occurrence, for the mule is an animal for whom, when one knows him, one entertains affection, and, besides this, each mule carries two maunds of useful provisions on his back, and we were not too well off for transport. After another wet night on another wet camping ground, we marched into Phari. We had left the green valley of the Chumbi; we had mounted upwards through the pine forests beyond; we had emerged into a region of rugged scenery where great rocky precipices hung over us. We wondered what still wilder regions we were now approaching as we still climbed higher. But all of a sudden, as it

seemed, we had reached the end of our climb and found ourselves on a level green plain with rolling green downs around us, the sort of homely gentle scene that meets you when, for instance, you cross the border between England and Scotland, or pass on the railway the lower fells of Cumberland—a scene suggestive of sheep grazing on rich close turf, and of comfortable homesteads hidden away in the folds of the hills. This abrupt transition brought to the mind the tale of Jack and the Beanstalk. It seemed that we had climbed to the top of the world that had hitherto been ours, and were starting afresh on a new level.

This sensation was chiefly illusory; for that level green plain and those rolling green downs deceived one with their greenness, and proved on closer inspection to be but indifferent pastures, while after a mile or two the plain bent round a corner, and we came in view of such mighty irregularities of the earth's

surface as left no doubt as to our being still in the very heart of the mountains. For as we turned that corner, suddenly, as with a sudden flash, and all lit up with the sunlight that had just dispelled the clouds, Chumalari stood before us, his white top only a few miles away, but many thousand feet above us, and so reaching to a height in the sky that to the stranger's eye was almost appalling.

To us men the romance of scenery is very elusive. I have known nice old ladies to whom a fine sunset was a real substantial joy, giving them the same nocturnal exhilaration that baser clay can only acquire by absorbing a bottle of champagne. Given a male mind properly swept and garnished for the time being by some potent influence—preferably of course a sweet influence of the feminine gender—even the most businesslike and prosaic of us can, if only for short intervals at a time, empty ourselves of the things of this ugly world and assimilate a little of

nature's beauty. But in ordinary humdrum life, when that sweet feminine influence is no longer at his side (or, if still at his side, has lost much of its old magic by having been so foolish as to be now his mere wife), the ordinary brutal humdrum man regards the finest waterfall in the world as merely a good place at which to dilute his whiskey, finds blue sunlit waters rather trying to the eyes, and execrates the glorious sweep of the mountain in front of him as conducive to perspiration and shortness of breath as he climbs it. We can't help it, we men; we are built that way; it is the nature of the beast. But even so when by some strange accident we are taken unawares, and some rare and magnificent glory of nature suddenly confronts us, and, without our consenting or even against our will, pierces that crust of sordid matter-of-factness that usually encases us so securely, as did that great white mountain Chumalari that day when we met him on the Phari plain, then we too abandon ourselves

and for once in a way find ourselves drinking in the beauty as greedily as ever that old lady drinks in her sunset.

A few miles along the plain brought us to Phari.

CHAPTER VIII

TO KANGMA

ALL our little columns concentrated at Phari. Our camp was just outside the 'jong' or fort. Phari-jong was quite typical of the genus 'jong,' looking from the outside like the sort of mediæval castle that sometimes adorns the foreground of a drop-scene in a theatre. On the inside it was rather extra-typical, being even more rambling, darker, and dirtier than most jongs. A grim humorist had selected the topmost garret as the post-office. This selection gave the local postmaster, who was also possessed of grim humour, the vastest entertainment. For the little columns came pouring in day after day, bringing all sorts of folk who were pining for their letters.

Every one, as soon as he was off duty, went head-down to the post-office. We were now at a level of 15,000 feet, and the climb, at that altitude, of several hundred feet of rough Tibetan passages and staircases was a great strain on the lungs to any one unused to it.

The postmaster sat in his office, cool and comfortable, while all day long officers, British rank and file, sepoys and followers, poured in for their letters, every one arriving panting, with his tongue lolling out, and quite unable to state his requirements for at least two minutes. The postmaster made a point of asking every one most politely what he wanted at the very moment of his arrival, so as not to keep him waiting, and grinned diabolically at the desperate efforts of the latter to splutter out his name and address. When, as one of the victims in question, I went for my letters, and had duly provided him with my share of the entertainment, I asked him whether he was not enjoying himself, and he

assured me it was the best fun he had ever had in his life.

From Phari to Kangma we marched in two columns, of which I accompanied the second.

The 'Tang-Là' was our first halting-place—a bleak spot very much swept by the wind. From there we marched to Tuna, and thence to Dochen, with Chumalari on our right, showing us a new view of himself as we rounded each spur that jutted out into the plain. We passed many herds of the Kiang or wild ass, some of us galloping after them in an attempt to get a close view; but they are fleet and wary, and evaded us altogether. The simple peasant of that part of Tibet has been known to allude to the Kiang as the 'children of Chumalari,' and thus to explain their sanctity, for Chumalari himself is a sacred mountain. Whether belief in this origin of the Kiang is orthodox, or merely a local superstition, I do not know.

Hereabouts we passed the 'hot springs,'

where still lay what was left of the corpses of many Tibetans who had fallen in the fight that had occurred there some months before. We had, I am told, once actually buried these corpses when we found that the enemy were making no effort in that direction; but the Tibetans, holding curious theories on the subject, had again unearthed them. The principle that apparently governs Tibetan obsequies is the desirability of making a corpse fulfil its natural function as food for animals. Hence exposure of corpses as food for wolves or vultures causes them no pang. They even, it is said, so far elaborate the above principle as to regard a corpse as specially honoured when given as food to the domestic pig, the origin of this development of the principle being of course really utilitarian; for the high-placed Tibetan, since in his life he 'feeds high and lives soft,' must of necessity in his death be specially nutritious. Lama-fed pork is—so they say—regarded as the greatest of delicacies.

Leaving Dochen and the lake, on the bank of which it lies, we turned up a valley to our left, and emerged at Kalatso, the name given to the post which adjoins the lake of the same name. From here we marched along the Kalatso plain to Menza. The next day was to bring us into Kangma.

My commanding officer was with the first column, and had given me orders to ride on early on alternate days to meet him at the camp ahead of me before he left the latter. His hour for leaving each such camp would be 9 A.M., by which hour I had to arrive there. I had to bring a sergeant with me on each occasion. It was fifteen miles from Menza to Kangma. The road was rather rough, so they said, but one could cover the distance in two hours and a half, so I decided to start with the sergeant at half-past six. At a quarter-past six I found that my pony had bruised a fetlock against a stone in the night and was distinctly lame. I could not get another mount, and had to

share the sergeant's, and we had little more than our two hours and a half for the journey. It so happened that I had just been reading a story of primitive life in Western America, called 'The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come,' in which a very sound method by which two men can travel on one horse is alluded to. A. starts on horseback at, say, eight miles an hour, and B. on foot at, say, four miles. When A. has gone a given distance he dismounts, ties the horse to the nearest tree or stone, and proceeds on foot. Up in due course comes B., mounts the horse, and, riding on, should overtake A. just when A. has finished his fair share of walking; after which the process is repeated to the end of the journey.

I was A. and the sergeant was B. The road was quite deserted, and the part through which we were going was at that time reported quite peaceful, so there was practically no risk in leaving the pony alone for short spells at a time. It was a most

comfortable arrangement altogether. We travelled at the average rate of six miles an hour. Each of us had a pleasant ride alternating with a pleasant walk. Even the pony, though, when on the move, kept going pretty hard, yet had pleasant breathers between whiles. We arrived punctually at 8.55 A.M., of course to find that the first column had decided to halt a day at Kangma, and that therefore there need not have been any hurry. But then, of course, that is always the way in such cases.

We had one great adventure just before we reached Kangma. I had been walking, and the sergeant had just caught me up, on the pony, when two shots rang out. I located them as coming from a village a short way off. The sergeant affirms that they were both volleys. I was in a beastly funk, and perhaps the sergeant was not altogether unmoved. Just then two mounted infantrymen, fully armed, rode up from the Kangma direction. I have great respect for

mounted infantrymen, but I have known them spin yarns. We asked whether there were any of the enemy about, to which they replied that their name was legion, or words to that effect, and that they were all around us. This being so, it did not seem to matter in which direction we went; so we pushed on, indulging in the pleasure of each other's company for the time being (instead of one riding ahead while the other walked). Shortly we rounded a corner, and another shot rang out, followed by the appearance of two more mounted infantrymen. We asked the latter what the firing was about, and they told us that the commandant of the donkey corps, who was just round the next corner with his donkeys, was making a fine bag of pigeons.

CHAPTER IX

NAINI : TIBETAN WARFARE

We were all halted a day or two at Kangma. There was some truth after all in the yarn of the first two mounted infantrymen whom we had met on the road, for some of the enemy had been located not far away, and a flying column had gone out after them. The enemy evaded the column successfully, and the latter returned after no other incident except the death of a man and one or two mules from the effects of drinking water which the brave enemy, ignorant of such Western vagaries as the Geneva Convention, had artfully poisoned.

Some unladen mules, of which we stood in considerable need, were brought in that

same day by a small escort from Gyantse. They had been fired on *en route*, and so everything began to point to the chance of a bit of fighting in the near future.

From here onwards we amalgamated into one column, and that first march out of Kangma was particularly typical of the inconveniences of a comparatively long column when marching on a narrow high-road. It may seem strange, but was really quite natural, that our small force with its transport should occupy five miles of road-way, which was, I believe, its approximate length, and to get this five-mile-long serpent to crawl successfully through the 'Red Idol gorge,' and later on wriggle over a certain very narrow, rather ricketty bridge, that barred the way close to camp, was a matter of many tedious hours. Horribly cold it was too that afternoon, as one waited for one's kit to turn up, the valley just there being a veritable chimney that drew a terrific draught up from the Gyantse direction.

Our labours were also beginning to increase somewhat, owing both to the compressed fodder from India having run out, and our being no longer in a peaceful region, where we could procure fodder by contract. Both at Kangma and here we had to send out foraging parties. We were still observing a most courteous attitude towards the enemy, and were paying the villagers handsome sums for what fodder we took, provided any villagers showed themselves. However, in many cases the villages were completely deserted.

That afternoon a reconnoitring party of mounted infantry returned with one man badly wounded, and the report that the village of Naini, seven miles ahead, was strongly held by the enemy. This meant fighting on the morrow.

On the morrow we marched early to Naini, and disposed ourselves for battle. Below the road, and quite out of range from the village, were some convenient fields of

young barley, upon which we closed up all the transport, and removed the loads. We were dreadfully punctilious at that period of hostilities about commandeering fodder or damaging crops, and as soon as the fight began I remember the late Major Bretherton —the chief Supply and Transport officer— sending me with a delightfully worded message to the commandants of units regarding the extent to which their animals might graze. I was to tell them that, though all damage to crops was to be rigidly avoided, yet if by any chance a mule did so far forget himself as to nibble a blade or two of young barley, the matter need not on the present occasion be taken too seriously, as the only ground available for closing up the transport was the ground on which that nice young barley was growing. So while 'all day long the noise of battle rolled' a hundred feet above them and two hundred yards away, the transport animals did themselves 'top-hole' on the enemy's best young barley; a good

thing too, for they got precious little fodder when they reached camp that night.

I got a good view of the Naini fight, seeing most of it in company with the General's Staff. A portion of the Gyantse garrison had come out to assist, and peppered the village and lamasarai from a high hill above, while our own column enveloped them from other directions. We made some fine big holes in their walls, and many a bee's nest of laymen and fighting monks was disturbed by a well-directed shell. Later on came the turn of the infantry at what must have been unpleasantly close quarters.

The fighting in Tibet was of course, in one sense, quite a minor matter. But, on the other hand, it was quite a distinctive kind of fighting, and, as such, does not deserve to be ignored. My share in those fights was mainly that of an interested spectator, and in this capacity I give my opinion of it.

I should say that for any one who, like myself, never had to go within a certain

distance of the position, there could be no more gentlemanly way of getting your baptism of fire than on a Tibetan battlefield. The jingal, for instance, is a delightful weapon at that range. Of course, if a jingal bullet hit you (a heavy rough-hewn thing of about three inches diameter), it would make a hole that it would take a lot of surgery to fill up. But normally, in the latter stages of its flight, the jingal bullet lets you know it is coming. Furthermore, except at close range, it is very inaccurate. So if what you desire on the battlefield is mild excitement, with the minimum of risk, I would recommend exposing yourself to jingal-fire at, say, from six to twelve hundred yards.

A very different tale would be that of the fighter in the firing line. Most of the fights in Tibet involved not only street-fighting but house-fighting, and this species of fun generally began immediately after a steep climb of several hundred feet. I can imagine few greater physical and moral trials in modern

warfare than that endured by those officers and men of ours, who, while gasping for breath after a race up a steep slope in that rare air, penetrated in small parties first through narrow streets, then into dingy court-yards, and lastly into byres and store-rooms and living-rooms that were generally pitch dark, not knowing from what hole or corner, or with what murderous form of clumsy firearm, they might not at any moment be fired upon by an unseen foe at close quarters. For the sake of those who went through this trial and were not found wanting, Tibetan warfare should not be despised.

The fight at Naini was waged for many weary hours. Its spectacular charm had soon worn off. The juxtaposition of fierce excitement and deadly boredom is a strange feature of warfare. There, two hundred yards away, men were killing one another, and here were some of us positively yawning!

Late in the afternoon, our pride of conquest somewhat chastened by the pangs of

hunger, we marched onwards to Gyantse. As we drew nearer we heard what seemed like a very irregular artillery salute fired by very drunken gunners in honour of some personage entitled to a very large number of guns. It was only the jingals in the Gyantse-jong firing away at us patiently and solemnly, in the pious hope that they one day might hit something. Their main objective was a ricketty bridge across the Gyantse river which we had to cross before reaching our camp. Some jingal bullets did on occasion fall fairly near the bridge, and one mule was actually hit in the act of crossing. The crossing of that bridge took till late into the night. All the way from Naini the path was intersected with irrigation nullahs, of which most were full of water. This caused many checks, which culminated in the block at the bridge. The latter began to fall to pieces before all the transport was over, some animals occasionally falling off into the water. The last of the rearguard reached camp about midnight.

CHAPTER X

AT GYANTSE: FIGHTING: FORAGING: TIBETAN RELIGIOUS ART

THE ten days or so spent at Gyantse were occupied in fighting, in waiting, through periodical armistices, for the result of negotiations which came to nothing, in sight-seeing and in foraging for our present needs, and for the advance to Lhassa.

The two fights here alluded to were the taking of Tsechin and the taking of Gyantse-jong. At the former I again had a front seat in the stalls, watching the show in company with the headquarters' Staff, but had to leave, with some aggravating message to camp, just as the curtain was rising on the last act. During that long day, at

the end of which Gyantse-jong was taken, I saw very little of the fighting till just the very climax, when certain duties took me to the village Pálá, where the Staff were watching the final phase. No boredom on this occasion, but intense excitement. The final assault on the jong was a sight well worth remembering, coming as it did at the close of so tedious an action. The artistic effect of the Maxim on what one might call spectacular warfare is, I think, greater than that of artillery. Shells going off at intervals of course bring out the tragedy of war by the awful noise which they make, but the rapid ping-ping-ping of the Maxim sets your blood tingling and really excites you. It was a glorious spectacle, that last assault. The rush through the breach of those Ghurkhas and their comrades into that frowning impregnable-looking jong to the tune of artillery, dynamite, and Maxims would have appealed to the veriest man of peace. And as the jong became ours, the cheer that went up

from every point where troops and followers stood in knots, watching the outcome, was a glorious climax to that long day.

A flying column that followed the retreating enemy to Dongtse failed to catch them up, but returned with a fine haul of useful forage. Foraging had for some time been the order of the day, except when fighting interfered with it. The Gyantse plain is very rich, with villages dotted about at close intervals, all standing among rich crops and nominally containing plenteous stores of what were our staple needs. But the art of hiding such stores is possessed in a high degree by the Tibetan. Some officers, who later on had much practice in foraging, became experts in finding the hidden storerooms, knowing at a glance at what point on a given wall in an upper chamber the wall painting ceased to be of a permanent nature, and was merely a temporary daub concealing the rough cement and pile of loose unbaked bricks which blocked the doorway of what,

after use of crowbar and mallet, proved a veritable mine of grain or barley flour.

Of course, while at Gyantse, the towns and lamasarais of Gyantse and Tsechin were our happiest hunting-grounds. In one lofty room alone we one day found eight thousand maunds of barley flour, all neatly bagged and sealed with a Tibetan official seal, doubtless a mobilisation reserve of the Tibetan army, and, alongside of it, another similar room filled with loose grain to a height which we could never really explore, since the weight of the grain made it impossible to open the door more than an inch or so, from which small aperture our requirements trickled out by the mule load. If we had had enough transport to carry on from Gyantse all the supplies which we found there, our commissariat problems would have been easy.

As we foraged on the days following these fights our way was strewn with corpses. The warriors from the Khám country, who formed a large part of the Tibetan army,

were glorious in death, long-haired giants, lying as they fell with their crude weapons lying beside them, and usually with a peaceful, patient look in their faces. As types of physical humanity they could not be easily excelled. I remember one day one of the Khám men, a prisoner, was helping me to set in order a refractory watermill stone with which I was trying to grind wheat into flour. My commanding officer came to see how I was getting on and caught sight of the prisoner. He gazed at him in admiration and then exclaimed:

'By Jove! what a fine corpse he would make!'

Very brutal of him I thought it was till I had seen more corpses, and then I realised the true artistic insight of the remark.

I suppose it would be no more possible for an ordinary person to do justice to Gyantse as a sightseer than for any one who had had no classical education to visit Rome or Athens in the true academic spirit. Just as the key to those places lies in a

knowledge of classical history, mythology, and archæology, so would the true key to Gyantse lie in a knowledge of the history of Buddhism in general, and of the Tibetan variations of Buddhism in particular. The main tenets of Buddhist doctrine, as one may acquire them in a handbook or an occasional magazine article, afford very little clue to Tibetan religious art. Buddha himself one can understand, and one becomes quite to know and admire the gently superstitious, ever-smiling expression that is faithfully caught in every statue and picture of him which one sees. And one can understand the motive in exemplifying the variations of human fortune by pictures of the wheel of life which show types of all the degrees of human happiness and unhappiness—instances of indescribable tortures at one side of the wheel, lesser miseries adjoining it, followed by similar gradations so arranged that as we go round the circle we come at last to fair scenes of ideal human bliss. But the appli-

cation of the same kind of gradation to deities worshipped, and to the representations of them given in art, is not so easily understood. There is a certain highly symmetrical edifice standing in Gyantse monastery. The centre of it consists of one huge Buddha reaching from the ground to the height of, I should say, one hundred and fifty feet. Round this are built tiers upon tiers of small shrines; each tier contains one less shrine than the tier below it. The shrines are of equal size, so that the general effect of the whole edifice is that of a pyramid. You rise from tier to tier by a narrow hidden staircase. Each shrine contains one idol. If you start at a certain point on any of the tiers, and go round that tier, you will first enter the shrine of a perfect Buddha, for whom you will feel at least some reverence. The next shrine will contain an idol that impresses you less, and has about it some taint of the world. The next is a thoroughly worldly idol, the next is ugly, the next is obviously

wicked, and the next a demon. The demons grow in demoniacal qualities till suddenly you arrive again at the Buddha from whom you started. The tiers above are all arranged on the same principle, except that, the number of shrines decreasing by one in each case, the gradation from Buddha to demon grows more abrupt as you ascend.

Then again, in the most holy of spots, not only in Gyantse but even, for instance, in the audience hall in the sacred 'Potá-Là,' or palace-monastery of Lhassa, one comes across images of what to European eyes appears the lewdest character, and similar representations are constantly found on the painted scrolls, which everywhere are seen hanging in the monasteries.

Such strange excrescences on the external face of a religion that ranks so high in regard to the spirituality of its essential tenets, and the extent and depth of its influence on human life, as does Buddhism, seem only to point to the endless intertwin-

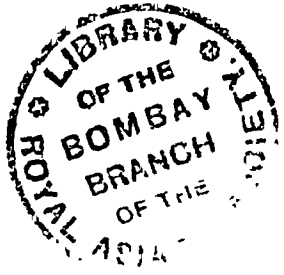
ings of religions that must ever have been in process since the world began. Here we have, for instance, one of the noblest and purest of religions tainted—at any rate as regards the art which is ancillary to it—with those twin poisons of demon-worship and priapism; all contact with which one would have imagined it to have been pure enough and strong enough to throw off centuries ago.

That strange similarity on less essential points that exists between religions which are far removed from each other, both in history and in doctrine, makes one long to read some really comprehensive history of human religion that will, by dipping down into the furthest depths of the past, reveal to us the answer to such problems as, for instance, the strong and apparently family likeness between the joss-sticks and tallow altar-lamp of the Buddhist, and the incense and wax-candle of ornate Christian ritual.

Though it would appear that what is

barbaric may survive, in the form of ritual, as an acknowledged and in some cases, it may be, even a helpful adjunct to a religion which in every other respect has cast off all that is barbarous, yet some of those demons and those licentious pictures that we saw in Tibet seemed to the Western mind altogether too vile to be thus explained away.

But, even so, what fool shall rush in and criticise the East?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CHAPTER XI

THE START FOR LHÀSSA: A DIGRESSION ON SUPPLY AND TRANSPORT

SUDDENLY the order came that we were to march to Lhassa forthwith. Who should and who should not form the Lhassa column must have been a difficult question to settle. To perform invidious tasks of this sort must be the most trying feature of generalship. It would be hard to find an occasion on any expedition when, to the individual soldier, going on seemed to mean so much, and staying behind so little. Forbidden cities are so fascinating, and the idea of assisting in drawing aside a pardah so appeals to our rude imaginations, that the

desire to reach Lhassa was especially great. Those high passes in front of us, the shores of the great Palti lake and the upper Brahmaputra, that we knew not how we should cross, all seemed also to point to a varied adventure, and there was a spice of excitement in the thought of marching through a country, on the resources of which we should have largely to maintain ourselves, while as yet we knew hardly anything of their kind and extent.

We left the sad Gyantse garrison behind us, and marched off one morning in threatening weather that soon turned to rain, our path for the first few miles lying across a veritable bog. We consisted of the whole of a British and a section of a native mountain battery, of a wing of the Royal Fusiliers, of two companies of mounted infantry (drawn from various native regiments, and consisting of Sikhs, Ghurkhas, and Pathans) of the 8th Ghurkha Rifles, several companies of the 32nd Sikh Pioneers and the 40th Pathans,

one company of Sappers and Miners, and two machine gun detachments. Several field hospitals or sections of field hospitals accompanied us, besides, of course, many other miscellaneous necessities such as ammunition column, treasure, supply column, post-office, veterinary establishment, and field park. The telegraph department was conspicuous by its absence, it being a feature of the advance to Lhassa that we left the telegraph behind at Gyantse—a proceeding which doubtless had both its inconvenient and its convenient results. Last but not least came the transport. One may divide this into regular and irregular. The regular transport consisted of the whole or portions of five Indian mule corps, the 6th, the 7th, the 9th, the 10th, and the 12th; the irregular of a cooli corps, and two locally raised corps—one of yaks and the other of donkeys.

Our transport was so big an item and so big a necessity that a short sketch of it as it

ploughed through the sodden fields outside Gyantse that wet July morning may not come amiss.

The average Indian transport pack mule, aged probably fifteen to eighteen years old, is the finest old soldier we have got. If, like Lord Roberts's gray arab, he were allowed to record his services round his neck, he would display a fine collection of medals and clasps. Allowing that he is now fifteen and that he joined the ranks ten years ago, and allowing as a general principle that where a frontier expedition of any size takes place the bulk of the regular mule transport of the army in India is required for it, we can take it that at the age of six he had a rough breaking-in to war conditions in Chitral; that, after a year or so of peace, he carried convoy stores or troops' baggage over many weary marches in the Malakand or the Tochi battery, or in Tirah. In 1900, as likely as not, he was entrained one hot midsummer day, carried off to Calcutta, and shipped to China. As an

alternative he may have been wanted in South Africa. Later on he very probably served in the Mahsud blockade. Between whiles he has had a few spells of cantonment life, but has probably spent his hot weathers daily carrying the needful water supply up to some hill station, perched on a hilltop, from a reservoir two thousand feet below, and a portion of his cold weathers in the feverish sham warfare of manœuvres. All the time he has preserved the same dogged, cheery temperament, getting out of the train at the base of an expedition, seeing there the familiar sights that portend field service, then having a good roll in the dust, getting up and shaking himself, as though to say, 'Here we are again,' like the clown in the pantomime; or plodding along through rain or snow or hot weather duststorm with two maunds on his back, and only wondering casually what will be the next practical joke which his masters will perpetrate on him. His is a rough lot, but he takes it kindly, and with good grain and fodder is not unhappy.

The mule driver also is a man of parts. Compare him with that fine soldier—the cavalryman. The former has to feed, groom, fit and clean the gear of, and sometimes forage for, three or four animals instead of one, as is the case of the latter. Further, the cavalryman mounts his beast, while the mule driver marches on foot.

The case of the mule and his attendant came before the Government of India a few years ago, who decided to improve their status. They have since accomplished a great deal by introducing an organised corps system among Indian transport. The system was worked experimentally for some years, and is now an authorised and accomplished fact. The mule and his driver, instead of, as was formerly the case, being no men's children in particular, belong to their troop, to their subdivision, and to their corps. Pony corps is distinguishable by its uniform, and is commanded by a British officer, who has under him his own permanent subordinate

staff, and who is responsible for the well-being and efficiency of all the men and beasts in his charge.

The enhancement of efficiency and well-being, and, perhaps more than all, of the personal self-respect of the individual driver, which has been the result both of the new organised discipline and of the new *esprit de corps*, is very marked. It remains only to prove conclusively that in the field, the inter-organisation of transport can be sufficiently maintained to serve its object, without interfering with other military considerations. The allotting of their transport to combatant units, according to their exact requirements, without destroying the organisation of the transport units themselves, often constitutes a problem which a chief transport officer has difficulty in solving. The *via media*, which on this Expedition has afforded a solution, has been to let the transport organisation, if necessary, go to the winds on the march itself, but to give it the first claim

to consideration when once a column has reached camp.

Those irregular corps which supplemented the permanent military pack transport were most indispensable but delightfully heterogeneous. It may be interesting to describe the journey of, say, a maund of rice from Siliguri to Lhassa on these various forms of transport. Wrapped in its waterproof to keep off the rain torrents, the rice was dumped into a bullock-cart at Siliguri. If the road did not collapse from a landslip at any awkward moment and so drop the bullock-cart and its contents *en masse* into the Teesta river—a not infrequent occurrence—the rice-bag probably reached Rangpo. From there it probably proceeded for a few marches on the back of a pack bullock, a patient beast who moved slowly, and whose feet in that damp climate got very tender, and on those stony paths very sore. Later on it reached steep gradients where the pack bullock could no longer carry it, and it was

handed over for several marches to a cooli. The cooli would be a native of some hill district of India (Panch, for instance, or Darjiling). He and the comrades to whom he passed it on would take it over either the Jalap-Là or the Natu-Là, down into the Chumbi valley. From here a pack mule or an 'irregular' pack pony would take it up to Phári. From here across the Phári plain through Tuna and Kalatso and as far as Menza it would lie in an ekka, for this was flat country, and it had seemed worth while and eventually proved a signal success to drag up from India several hundred of those plainly built but strong little two-wheeled carts called ekkas, which hold five maunds each, and can be used on almost any road, however rough, provided it is wide enough to hold both wheels. These ekkas had been run up behind their ponies as far as possible, then taken to pieces, and carried in fragments on the backs of coolis over the passes and up on to the Phári plain, where, at

a height of 15,000 feet, they were put together again and plied to and fro, at first greatly to the astonishment of the resident Tibetan, who had never seen any wheels other than prayer-wheels. Most of the ekkas were drawn by ponies of the small 'country-bred' type brought from India, but the casualties among these were sometimes replaced by draught yaks.

From Menza onwards our rice-bag had a choice of mounts. It might go on a pack mule, or meander slowly along on the back of a pack yak, or, with the other bag alongside it, entirely eclipse from human view the most miniature of donkeys, who, nevertheless, if allowed ample time to look about him, and to pick up weird grazing by the roadside, would eventually arrive in camp none the worse, and with his load intact after a uniform progress of about one mile an hour.

On one or other of these animals the rice-bag would eventually reach Lhassa, or, if it foregathered with the Lhassa column on its

way up, it might be handed over to one of the coolis who accompanied that column. It probably reached Lhassa intact, its waterproof bag having protected it from all weathers; but it might also have got a small hole somewhere among its ample coverings, and lost a pound or two on the way, or—for such is human nature—arrive still weighing the original eighty pounds, but containing a stone or two in the place where some few odd pounds of rice ought to have been.

The manners and customs of our various transport animals would form an interesting study in natural history. The yak, to the uninitiated intruder, was of course the most striking. The mule we know, and the donkey we know, and the cooli was more or less of the same species as ourselves; but the yak was a novelty. The yak is a buffalo in petticoats. This seems an incongruous combination, for the *à priori* idea of a buffalo is of something fierce, and of petticoats, of something not fierce. But in this case petticoat influence

has altogether prevailed, for the yak is the mildest natured of animals. He moves very slowly, takes life very quietly, and is content with little here below, or rather here above, for if you take him below 9,000 feet he pines for the heights. I believe he is really at his cosiest when lying in a snowdrift on a winter's day with his petticoats around him and only his horns showing. He then feels really well tucked up.

Both yaks and donkeys were very cheap forms of transport. It is true that yaks had a way of dying and donkeys of deserting, but even so their initial cost was very small, they needed very few drivers in proportion to their numbers, and possessed the art of living on the country. An animal that along a line of communications of some four hundred miles' length, and lying in an inhospitable country, neither asks you to bring him up fodder or even grain from the base, nor yet expects you to go foraging for him, is indeed a treasure.

The yak and donkey drivers were Tibetans, as also were many of the hospital ambulance carriers. The most noticeable points about these Tibetans were that they were inveterate gamblers, and were also very much married. The idea of accompanying us without their womenkind was quite foreign to them, and we had to accede to their prejudices in the matter. Merry little souls those women mostly were. Their foreheads and noses usually smeared with that pigment of sows' blood which proclaims to the world the Tibetan woman's chastity, they were ever to be seen laughing or chaffing one another, either on the march or else in camp, over their domestic duties or their knitting. Their stocking-knitting was of a high order, except that the art of 'turning a heel' was unknown to them.

I remember passing a knot of them one day as we climbed one of the worst passes that we had to encounter on the march—a climb of four thousand feet without a break. Hill

people know better than any one the advantage of breathing rhythmically, and the Tibetan loves to acquire this rhythm by singing over any work that strains him at all. Tibetan men and women, as they thresh their corn with the flail and chant pretty ditties in unison, and Tibetan boatmen on the Sangpo, will sometimes sing to their work. And here was this band of women singing cheerily as they climbed that mountain side, and never pausing in their song. They were well up with the advance guard too, and the chorus could be heard all down the column—a novel sort of band with which to cheer a British army onwards on a toilsome march!

The cooli too, especially he who hied from the hinterland of Darjiling, was as merry a soul as you meet on a day's march. Some were quite boys, not more than sixteen, yet the way they shouldered their loads was wonderful. The regulation load was eighty pounds, but I have often seen quite a youngster with a hundred pounds on his back, taking it

steadily along up thousands of feet, and taking it as a matter of course, and giving you a grinning greeting as you passed him. When off duty, they would be for ever skipping about like mountain goats, skylarking, and pulling one another about. The supervising staff of Ghurkhas, too, all had the jolly Ghurkha face. For a cheery family party it would be hard to beat that cooli corps.

But that Lhassa column with its train of transport has got well out of the bog by now and it behoves us to overtake it.

CHAPTER XII

TO RALUNG: MORE SUPPLY MATTERS: A VISIT TO A MONASTERY

FROM Gyantse to Ralung is a steady upward incline, and took us three days. It rained most of the time, both day and night; it was difficult to get dry again when once you were wet, and there was a good deal of discomfort experienced in all quarters. One camping ground was particularly unpleasant, which for the most part consisted of ploughed land that was not only soaking with the rain, but had recently been irrigated. As we had risen considerably higher than the Gyantse plain, the crops on this and similar ground had hardly begun to show. In fact, from here onwards for many days to come, there

seemed very little chance of obtaining any grazing for our animals. We had taken all the transport we could, and loaded it with as many supplies as possible, all selected according to our known needs on the one hand, and the possible but unknown resources of the country on the other; but even so our prospects were not rosy. The mule, for instance, cannot live on grain alone: he must have fodder, and one mule in a very few days will consume as much fodder as is equivalent in weight to his own authorised load. Hence, if you provide a mule with a reserve of fodder to last him that number of days and make him carry it, you might just as well leave him behind, since he will then be able to carry nothing else except his own fodder. This, in a country where fodder is not locally procurable, is, at any rate in the case of the pack mule, one of the great problems of army transport, and we were brought face to face with it more than once during this march. Grain too is heavy stuff, or, in other

words, gets quickly consumed. We used over two hundred maunds a day, or more than a hundred mule loads, and so could not start our march with many days' supply in reserve without excluding other things that also had to be carried. The next heaviest item was tsampa (the Tibetan barley flour which we were now using as a substitute for the 'áta' or coarsely ground wheat flour usually consumed by natives). Of this we used seventy maunds daily, and so had only a few days in reserve. Meat, though a large item, is much more tractable stuff, for it walks on its four feet till you kill it. It can even be of use in carrying other things. For instance, we had made up our minds that, if sheep and cows ran short, we would eat each yak that, on account of the depletion of supplies, had no longer a load to carry! The other items of food, though many of them costly and highly essential, were none of them very bulky, and of these we had been able to bring along some weeks' reserve.

Our more pressing needs were therefore confined to fodder and grain and tsampa, and many were the foraging parties that went forth on arrival in camp, or that made a detour from the line of march in search of these articles, some drawing blank, some getting very little, and some occasionally a fair haul. At Ralung we got a fair haul. There is a very fine monastery there, situated up a valley five miles from where we camped. I remember spending a very pleasant afternoon there. I had gone there, immediately after arriving in camp, with my commanding officer to see what could be got out of the place. We found some whole barley, some tsampa, and a fair stock of straw. My commanding officer left me there to await the necessary transport while he went back to camp to send it. I really had a very pleasant time, being hospitably entertained both by the monks and also the nuns—especially the latter. They brought me out 'chang' to drink, a home-brewed light wine, made I believe from

barley, and the carcass of a sheep that had been cooked whole, and from which you were expected to pick off your individual requirements. It had already had a lot taken from it, and from a certain self-assertiveness that there was about it, I concluded that it had been a standing dish for a considerable period, and contented myself with my own sandwiches. Then they came and talked to me through the interpreter whom I had with me, and quite a youthful little nun in a picturesque woolly red cap came and sat beside me and did her knitting. My overcoat had been wet through for three days, and the sun coming out gave me a chance of drying it. Quite warm and cosy it all was, with ladies' society and all thrown in. I was quite sorry when, after several hours of waiting, a long serpent-shaped line of mules slowly trailed up the valley and came for the grain, the tsampa, and the straw.

We were paying again for what we foraged, and I remember doling out what must have

seemed to the recipients a prodigious number of rupees. Tibetan monasteries are undeniably rich, but, especially in outlying parts, I fancy they do all their buying and selling in kind. For instance, they collect their taxes in kind, and it is certainly feasible for them to obtain labour, clothing, and such necessaries without having recourse to coin. The fact that the average Lama was unused to dealing in large sums of money seemed to always have one of two opposite effects. He either did not seem to grasp the fact that a large sum of money really represented 'articles of value,' and had no desire whatever to part with any of his possessions in exchange for it, or else, being either less ignorant and knowing its value, or more simple-minded and attracted by its glitter, he would accept the money with pronounced greed.

The effect of all the coin that we took to and left in the country must have had a curious economic effect on Tibet. For a country that trades largely by barter to be

suddenly flooded with rupees should, according to the ordinary principles of political economy, raise the current prices of all commodities to an extraordinary extent. However, Tibet, queer country that it is, has probably a political economy all of its very own, and will arrange such a matter entirely differently from Western expectation.

Even our rupees, as such, were not always approved, a distinction being sometimes drawn between those enfaced with King Edward's head and those enfaced with Queen Victoria's. The latter were approved on the ground that they were 'Kampani' rupees, the Queen's face being apparently regarded as the trade mark of the East India Company, of which the past generation of Tibetans must have heard and passed on the memory to their children, who still thought it was in existence. A new symbol, such as that of a man's head, was thus naturally viewed at first with suspicion.

CHAPTER XIII

THE KARO-LÀ

THE next day brought us just under the Karo-Là pass, and we camped at a height of 16,600 feet, with a great mass of snow so near us on the hillside that, while the sun was still up, it quite hurt our eyes to look in that direction. Avalanches of snow kept falling from the mass, coming down with a great thud that was almost startling. There was a little mountain sickness that night; but considering the height and the fatigue that had been involved in reaching it, there was remarkably little. A very little reconnoitring to the front in the early afternoon had revealed the enemy in position a mile or so the other side of the pass. They had built

two walls, one behind the other, on what appeared to be admirably selected ground. They seemed in fact to have been studying tactics to some purpose.

It was pleasant to get up the next morning in a sharp frost, and to get, as it were, one glimpse into winter—a glimpse, however, that only lasted till the sun got up. Cold for the past few months had not been our bugbear, but rain, and to-day there was no rain, the sky was cloudless, and the air crisp and fresh, and as soon as the sun was up, even moderately warm.

A few minutes' walk took us to the top of the pass, 16,800 feet. From there the road descended gradually, but the headquarters' Staff, whom for the moment I was accompanying, kept to the hillside at the same level as the top of the pass till they came to a good *coin de vantage* from which to view the first phase of the fight. For it was obvious that we were to be opposed.

The artillery stayed close by us, while

two parties of Ghurkhas were sent to scale the heights on either side, and the Fusiliers and some more infantry sent along the valley to attack the formidable-looking walls which the Tibetans had erected ahead of us.

It soon appeared that the enemy had decided at the last to leave the two walls down in the valley, behind either of which they could have assuredly made a useful stand, and had instead betaken themselves to the top of an almost inaccessible ridge overlooking the walls and about two thousand feet above them, on what was to us the right side of the valley. From near the top of this ridge a jingal soon began firing, and kept up an intermittent cannonade for several hours. Our artillery fired a great many rounds in that direction, but it was difficult to ascertain what effect they had. It was apparent that the brunt of the fighting during this phase of the action would fall upon the right party of Ghurkhas, who now in the distance, as they climbed steadily up the steep cliffs to our

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right front, looked like a string of tiny ants. They must have climbed two to three thousand feet before they reached the ridge, and thus gone into action at a height bordering on 20,000 feet. Before they could get near the enemy they had to cross a steep strip of snow. Ploughing through that within range of the enemy must have been somewhat trying. They got near them at last and accounted for a good many, including, it was afterwards ascertained, two important leaders. The ridge on which the Tibetans made their stand contained several caves, in which the enemy proceeded to hide, so that what followed must have been a species of ratting, which resulted in the capture of a good many prisoners.

Meanwhile the rest of our forces moved onwards, and the 40th Pathans were at length sent in pursuit of several of the enemy who were seen escaping upwards in the direction of a glacier, while the artillery from their new position kept the latter moving

with a few rounds of shrapnel. After a lot of ammunition, breath, and muscular tissue had been expended in this uphill pursuit, there was no sign left anywhere of the enemy on or below the skyline. They had apparently disappeared over the glacier.

We were then ready to march to camp. After a very short distance we passed Zara, a small village alongside of which is a Chinese rest-house. Close to the village we came upon our enemy's camp standing as they had left it in the morning. We got from it a good deal of tsampa and found more in the village itself, where they had evidently stored their reserve of this, their only article of food. We were in need of firewood too, and found a lot of useful logs lying about the camping ground, not to mention a large number of tent poles made of good seasoned wood, which burnt well that night in our own camp.

We camped about five miles further on, and about a thousand feet lower down. To

descend into a somewhat more plentiful air was a relief after a night and a day on the Karo-Là.

Our great difficulty that night was the lack of fodder. The mules had had a long day and no grazing, and there was not a blade of anything to give them. We did the best we could by doling out an extra pound of grain per animal, which was issued, after a long soaking, in small quantities at frequent intervals. This helped to fill the gaps left by the lack of fodder. A weed resembling vetch with a small purple flower grew on the hillside. We also cut some of this and gave it to the mules, who ate some of it, but on the whole preferred any loose ends of their next-door neighbours' jules or blankets. There was a great deal of woollen texture consumed that night, and some of the jules were a sorry sight in the morning.

The noise made at night by hungry mules who have no fodder is very distressing. That night they kept up a constant complaining.

CHAPTER XIV

NAGARTSE: ENVOYS: DEMOLITIONS: BATHS: BOILING WATER

NEXT day we reached Nagartse. This is a village surmounted by a jong which is perched at the end of a rocky ridge which runs from higher hills close down to a corner of the Lake Palti. There is one monastery inside the jong itself, and another on the hillside close by. There was a belt of standing crops close to the jong which were more advanced than those on the other side of the Karo-Là. On the whole we appeared to have reached something of an oasis. If the enemy had decided to make a stand against us here, we should have had very little difficulty in ousting

them. It would have been quite easy to send our mountain guns up on to the ridge above the jong, and a very few shells from that position would have probably secured a speedy evacuation. As a matter of fact, after a little parleying, they decided to evacuate, and we were to be free of the jong and all it contained, while of course we respected all property of theirs that pertained to religion.

From here onwards we were constantly met by deputations of envoys. The sight, which first of all used greatly to tickle the fancy, of important Tibetan personages under bright umbrellas and riding splendid mules splendidly caparisoned, and led by servants in gorgeous liveries, soon grew quite common. At every point of any importance along the line of our advance, this or a similar cavalcade would come hurrying up. What exactly used to take place at the interviews which followed, I am not privileged to know, but apparently fresh reasons were advanced on

each occasion for our not going further on our way to Lhassa, and fresh specious promises of considering our demands in a conciliatory though vague spirit were never wanting. But after a pleasant talk of many hours the purple and fine linen used to ride away baffled.

We halted at Nagartse for two nights. We found it a useful place to have captured. Unfortunately it contained little grain, of which now we were growing very short, but we found in it a large storehouse of bagged tsampa, which was very welcome. It proved also to have been used by the enemy as an arsenal, and several boxes of gunpowder were discovered in it, hidden away in a barn among quantities of straw. We had grown wary in searching jongs since the day, a fortnight or so before, when some accident such as a lighted match falling through a flooring in Gyantse-jong had caused the explosion of a store of gunpowder which had done much havoc among a party of Fusiliers

close by, several of whom had been seriously injured.

The gunpowder found at Nagartse was destroyed by us, and certain portions of the buildings demolished, the latter process producing a fine haul of firewood in the shape of the beams and rafters of the demolished houses. That process of demolition, in which the Sappers and Miners were past masters, is one of the dirtiest jobs I know. I was there to collect wood from the *débris*, which the Sappers and Miners demolished. As each wall falls it throws up a cloud of dust, and the filth of ages in small particles enters your eyes, your ears, your hair, and your mouth, and covers your clothes: no small matter when the clothes in which you stand may be the only suit you possess, and the function of having a bath cannot be undertaken lightly, but needs due warning, ample preparation, and assured leisure.

Many of us who serve in India have, for considerations of health, which to the English-

man at home seem absurd, but are nevertheless proved by Anglo-Indian experience to be imperative, had to abjure the cold bath. For such a hot bath is the only form of complete ablution. Your tent, if you do not exceed your scale of transport, will be small and will have no bath-room attached; then for preparing the bath, you have to remove all the ordinary contents of the tent outside into the open. Then will follow the setting in position of whatever form of camp bath you may possess, or may be able to borrow. Meanwhile an extra allowance of firewood has to be procured and the water made hot. By the time all is ready and you are beginning to take off your clothes a considerable time will have passed. If, during that period, some exigency of field service does not arise which requires you to leave all those preparations regretfully, and postpone the bath to another day, you are lucky. Even if you get through with your project without being disturbed, it is as likely

as not that the day for getting your clothes washed being a movable feast, you will have nothing to put on that will not seem a defilement to your freshly polished skin. Getting water hot enough was sometimes difficult when you wanted as much as is necessary for a bath, if the wind blew high and firewood was scanty. But this was nothing compared with the difficulty experienced in such forms of cookery as were associated with boiling water. The temperature at which water boils at an altitude of, say, 15,000 feet is, I believe, some forty degrees lower than boiling point on the sea-level. I wondered for a long time why my tea never seemed to have been made with boiling water, and I am afraid a certain faithful youth who used to make it for me got rather harsh treatment till my scientific education was sufficiently advanced to absolve him. Tea that is served up at a temperature of forty degrees below the normal boiling point can never be very nice. And

it got cool very quickly, which of course was natural. When I returned to India the other day, I could not make out why I was always burning my tongue over my tea, till I remembered that of course the tea which I was now drinking was made with water that boiled at an ordinary boiling temperature, and so remained too hot to drink till it had been allowed to stand for a decent interval.

It was in its effect upon rice as part of the natives' ration that this low boiling point was really of serious import. Rice well boiled is a good ration for natives, but there was many a case of indigestion and colic attributed to the rice which had been spuriously boiled at one of these high altitudes but never really cooked.

CHAPTER XV

LAKE PALTI: DRAWING BLANK: PETI-JONG

We left Nagartse in very wretched weather, and for the next few days marched in rain and camped in rain. A spell of bad weather like this, bad enough as it is for every one, man or beast, is perhaps worst of all for the mules who carry the tents, for a thoroughly soaked tent is literally twice its normal weight; and ours on this occasion, after the initial soaking, got no drier for several days in succession.

We were now marching alongside the Lake Palti. Once or twice the clouds broke for an hour or so, and the sun and sky lit up the lake, and so showed it us in its true colour—that unique shade of turquoise, unlike anything

in water scenery that the most travelled of us had ever seen before. I forget whether any scientific explanation of the peculiar colour was forthcoming among the learned, but the water of the lake being distinctly brackish may contain certain salts which, being diluted throughout the whole extent of the lake, produces some faint effect of colour on the water, and this, in combination with the sky's reflection, results in the turquoise shade which we so admired.

The Tibetans, with that large-mindedness which characterises their disposal of their dead, do not forget the fishes of the Lake Palti, and in that region corpses are made away with by being thrown into the lake.

It would thus appear that, what with its salts and functions as a cemetery, the lake supplied but indifferent drinking water. At one or two camps that we occupied by its side, there were no streams flowing down from the hills, so we had to be content with the lake, but no ill effects resulted.

Many were the fish that were caught in Lake Palti, as we skirted its banks, and that embellished those dinners that were now getting so plain. The regular trout fishing appliances—greenheart rod, reel and silk-spun line, catgut cast and choice Zulu or March-brown fly—accounted for large numbers; but side by side with the sportsman so equipped would stand some sepoy or follower with a lengthy stick, a bit of string, and a bent pin baited with a bit of tsampa, whose efforts would be crowned with success quite similar. Really accommodating fish those were, that gave the skilled angler the entertainment he sought, and yet did not disdain that humbler one who with simpler devices fished only for the pot.

Yasig was our first camp out of Nagartse.

There was a village two miles from camp, but it contained no supplies, and was deserted except for a few old women. In those days, to the casual traveller through Tibet, old women would have appeared to form the

bulk of the population. A useful thing, an old woman! You can use her as a cat's-paw. Though afraid to go yourself into the vicinity of the invading foe, you can yet send your old woman to watch over your interests in the village, to feed and milk the cows that you have left hidden there, to perform such small agricultural functions generally as may save the farm from utter ruin, and to return periodically with the latest news of the foe. That seemed to be the idea which dominated the Tibetans in this matter, and perhaps it was a sound one. I can certainly imagine no more effective 'chowkidar' upon a village than an ancient, toothless, slatternly Tibetan woman, who greets you with tongue out and thumbs upturned (the conventional symbols of submission), and weeps long and loud from the moment you approach her until you leave her. I believe Aristotle has defined tragedy as 'a purging of the emotions with sympathy and a kind of horror.' According to this

definition the sight of these old women was essentially tragic. You went to a village hoping to find in it a stock of good things, and you found only this old woman and nothing else. You were sorry for the old girl, of course; but when you saw the filth encasing her and the lice enveloping her, you were filled indeed with 'a kind of horror,' and rode away promptly with your emotions thoroughly purged after the correct Aristotelian method. The Tibetan of course knew that this would happen, and this was why he sent his old woman to guard his property.

We hoped not to draw blank at the next halt, for here we came to the village Pete, surmounted by Pete-jong, an important landmark on our route. But now we began to discover that some one had stolen a march on us, and was looting ahead of us. It appeared that, of the army that had opposed us at the Karo-Là, one portion had disappeared over the glacier, but that another was in retreat towards Lhassa, and was

feeding itself somewhat ruthlessly on the country as it went. From reports that reached us, it appeared also that the pay-masters of the Tibetan army regarded their duties lightly, and that the force in front of us, consisting mainly of mercenaries, had no compunction in looting not only the bare means of subsistence, but also any supplementary stores which by a generous calculation might seem equivalent in value to the arrears of their pay. Even so it was not so much what they took that spoilt our chance of finding stores to purchase, as the fact that each act of looting on their part at once became known in all the villages ahead, with the result that stores of all kinds, but especially grain and tsampa, were being hidden away from the reach of either the Tibetan army or ourselves with the utmost possible despatch. Hence our prospects again became far from rosy. There was fortunately some grazing at Pete-jong for the animals, but both grain and tsampa were

growing short. A day or two more, without some addition of these articles, would see us depleted.

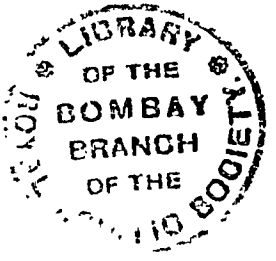
Pete-jong, a fine square-topped fort, built on a rock, overtopped by high mountains on one side, and overlooking the blue waters of Lake Palti on the other, looked magnificent, and more than ever reminded one of that drop-scene in the theatre. 'What a shame,' my wife says, 'to draw such horrid comparisons!' But I tell her they are not horrid really. In fact, a short sojourn in Tibet, a country freed from the obscurities of a thick atmosphere, and full of great dense mountains and lakes, and of startlingly crude contrasts of bright colours, quite revolutionises for the time being one's ideas of landscape art. In one of those diffident modern impressionist pictures, in which the artist is afraid to make his sky or water really blue, or his snow really white, or his mountain-tops really lofty or distinct, one finds nothing that appeals to one's sense of

vivid truth. But in that drop-scene above alluded to, lit up as it would be by glaring footlights, or in that glorious wealth of colour that is daubed by machinery on to even so low a thing as a tradesman's almanac, or, again, in that magic lantern slide reflected on a sheet, which gave to one as a child such romantic ideas of nature rampant in Switzerland or the Holy Land, there is more that represents the clear form and crude colour of the uplands of Tibet than would ever be found in the works of any up-to-date Royal Academician. As memory fades, and one becomes used again to denser atmospheres and to features of the earth's surface that are less pronounced, I suppose one's ideas will revert to their normal orthodoxy.

Pete-jong, fair and romantic from the outside, is the reverse within. We left a few troops there, making it a post on our line of communication (as we had done also in the cases of Nagartse and Raling). I was sorry for the Pete-jong garrison. The lower

part of the jong was occupied by byres and barns and dark chambers, all of them empty of all but filth. Through the centre of the jong, and through the rock on which it was built, a rough stone track, half path, half staircase, ran upwards, mostly in pitch darkness. From the walls at the side, from the roof overhead, and from the ground beneath, moisture seemed to be always exuding, the walls and roof being all slimy and musty, while greasy mud oozed perpetually from the interstices of the stones on the floor. No sunlight ever reached this dark passage, so that the moisture could dry no faster than it was replenished by that hidden spring in the rock which apparently was its source. The only suitable habitable rooms were high up at the top of the jong, and these were designed as barracks, hospital, store depot, and post commandant's quarters. But every time any one went outside the jong from his quarters, he had to go down this slimy black artery and return the same way.

After halting one night at Pete-jong the column marched on in soaking rain to the foot of the Kamba-Là. Here we were to leave Lake Palti and mount the pass that stood above our camp.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CHAPTER XVI

OVER THE KAMBA-LÀ: THE LAND OF PROMISE

ABOUT a thousand feet of zig-zag climbing were to bring us to the top of the pass, where we would again for the moment stand over 16,000 feet. The morning was fairly fine, and the clouds high. It took hours, of course, before our five-mile-long column had reached the top. We toiled up slowly, many of us with sad misgivings, for that supply column in the rear was grievously light, and its further depletion would mean much to all of us. To any one whose thoughts were for official reasons specially driven into this channel, the moment of arrival at the cairn that marked the summit of the Kamba-Là was perhaps the most critical moment of

the Expedition, if not even its veritable turning point. Since leaving Gyantse we had marched through a country that seemed to grow more and more destitute of the supplies we needed. Chance had given us an occasional largess, and here and there we had lighted upon something of an oasis; but latterly in places upon which we had set our hopes we had found nothing. And here we were leaving even the sparsely cultivated shores of the Lake Palti, climbing into the barren mountains, and then descending into the unknown. But, as that eventful summit was reached, what a view met our gaze! Beyond us a deep gully sloped down to a valley four thousand feet below. The descent for the first two thousand feet would be over bare bleak hillside: after that we would descend across the wood-line, below which firewood, at any rate (an article for which, in certain altitudes, yak-dung had often been substituted), would be found in plenty. And below that belt of forest, and on either side

of a broad river, we saw thick green crops that meant grazing galore, and here and there among the crops large prosperous-looking villages, or stately monasteries that should assuredly be well stocked with grain and tsampa and other delights. One thought of Moses when he caught his first glimpse of the promised land!

Our only fear was of the Tibetan army fleeing in front of us—whether they might not have looted this valley also, and frightened the inhabitants into hiding all their stores. But the valley was so large and prosperous-looking that it seemed certain that their depredations could not have affected the whole of it. So we went down the hill with glad hearts. The first two villages we passed, as we entered the main valley, were empty, and for a moment we were afraid again; but a mile further on we came upon a large village—that of Kamba Baji—which on inspection proved a veritable mine of wealth.

We camped for that night beside it, and spent the afternoon probing its resources. The Kazi (or headman) of Kamba Baji was our friend from the first. He gave us all he had, taking our coin in exchange in the spirit in which it was offered. He owned a great deal of land up and down the valley, and that land and its products both then and afterwards, he placed ungrudgingly at our service, even though the rupees which he received in exchange, albeit generous payment, hardly compensated him for the annoyance which, as a substantial country gentleman, he must have felt at our unwarrantable intrusion upon his property. Our relations remained cordial ever afterwards. His house lay on the road which the escort to the post always took between Chaksam and Pete-jong. For that escort, as they rode up, two elderly handmaidens of the Kazi's household were ever found waiting with brimful jugs of new milk in their arms, with which to refresh the travellers.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CROSSING OF THE TSANGPO: A SAD ACCIDENT

THE following day we marched down the Tsangpo or Brahmaputra to Chaksam Ferry. A small column of mounted infantry had ridden ahead of us and captured the local flotilla, which consisted of two large rectangular ferry boats, capable each of holding about twenty mules, a hundred men, or two hundred maunds of stores. Each boat was decorated with a roughly carved figure-head representing a horse. One horse had lost one of its ears, which rather detracted from its otherwise imposing appearance. The party that had preceded us to capture the ferry had also, by the time the main column

arrived, penetrated the monastery which overlooked the river, made friends with the monks, and engaged the services of the local ferrymen, who all belonged to the monastery. The monks also placed at our disposal several skin boats. These were curious craft. They resembled the Welsh coracle in shape, being quite square, but were a great deal larger, and capable of holding several people at a time. They consisted merely of skins stretched over thin stays of wood, were very light, and drew very little water. A man rowed them from one end, sitting on the gunwale, any old bit of rope being used in place of rowlocks to attach the rough peel-shaped oars to the sides of the boat. Sometimes two boats were tied together to make one, in which case one boatman would row at one end of the now oblong craft, while another, sitting opposite him and facing him on the gunwale at the far end, would assist by 'backing water.' Progress was slow in any case.

We had brought with us several 'Berthon' boats, which, consisting as they did only of canvas stretched on to a wooden framework, and being divisible into two halves, had been carried along on the backs of coolies without much difficulty. We had with us also a useful gang of Attock boatmen, men who knew how to circumvent the eddies and currents of the Indus in its upper reaches, and who did not fail us on the Tsangpo. With the two large ferry boats, the skin boats, the Berthon boats, the Attock boatmen, and the contingent of Tibetan boatmen from the monastery, all ready to hand, it was possible to begin the crossing of the river without a moment's delay. Meanwhile, in order to reduce the number of mules that would otherwise be largely monopolising the large ferry boats, it was decided to swim some mules across—a work which was taken in hand at once. At the same time the sappers, who in the field-packs had brought up various appliances for facilitating

ferry work, made haste to set hawsers, 'travellers,' and wires in position for immediate use. As soon as these contrivances were in working order, which was not long, the crossing proceeded at a pace which exceeded our expectations.

But, before the crossing had well begun, the saddest event of the Tibet Expedition had occurred. We had lost a good many men in action on various occasions, and a few officers. In the preceding winter there had been deaths more or less frequent from such ills as flesh is heir to. But to fall in action is a special contingency which all soldiers have to face, and to die by disease is the usual lot of mankind. At the loss of comrades in these ways we grieve, but do not grieve with any amazement. Far different from this normal grief was our feeling when we heard that some sepoys, and with them Major Bretherton, our chief Supply and Transport officer, had, while crossing the river, been caught by one of several eddies formed

by the sharp jutting out of a certain rocky headland into midstream, been capsized, sucked down by the eddies, and drowned.

The gloom that was cast was, as I have said, greater than that cast by the loss of comrades in action. The ill luck in the case of Major Bretherton seemed cruel. A moment before we had seen him full of health, cheery and active, confident of seeing in a few days a happy termination to the anxieties which in this march to Lhassa, with necessarily slender commissariat, had been largely borne by himself. We had known him not only as decorated for past services, but as having, during these past few months, by his able and perpetual and unsparing work, ever daily enhanced a reputation that was already assured. Thus here was one, full of life and ripe for honour, cut off in his prime. Upon the Kamba-Là, a day ago, we had thought with a laugh of him as Moses viewing the promised land, and now, as a lump came into the throat, the same thought recurred,

but this time full of sadness, for Lhassa, the promised land, to help us to reach which he had striven for nearly a year, was the land which he himself was not to see.

His body was carried down the Tsangpo, and we grieved at this, for we could not pay it the honour we desired. But why should we have grieved? For there, a pioneer always, who had ever gloried in exploring the confines of the Indian Empire, he had but followed his bent, pursuing the mysterious course of that river whose outlet still baffles us.

. . . . .

A melancholy sequel to the death of an officer on field service, whether occurring in this or in any other way, is the inevitable auction of his effects, for the conveyance of few of which to the base is transport likely to be available. A committee of adjustment assembles, and, after reserving only such articles as will be obviously acceptable to his relations as mementoes and can easily be

carried, puts up the remainder to auction. To be auctioneer of the effects of a comrade is not an enviable post. I had to auction Major Bretherton's things, and found that the adoption of the correct, breezy, business-like auctioneer's manner was up-hill work. A man so stamps his individuality on his belongings that often some well-worn familiar garment, as for instance the 'coat-warm British' with fur-lined collar that the officer had been used to wear on cold mornings, brings, as you hold it up to sale, many sad associations. And yet you must look round inquiringly, you must snatch on to the first bid, and appeal loudly for a higher. When the topmost bid is reached and no other is forthcoming, you must throw the coat to the buyer with a careless air and collect his rupees.

The prices that different articles fetch at these auctions is often amazing. The demand of course depends on whether the force as a whole has grown short of the particular

article now for sale, and whether it can or cannot be obtained by the individual through the post. Beyond Gyantse there was no regular parcels post, so that of many articles we were feeling a keen want. Accordingly, a few sheets of note paper and a few envelopes held up in the hand as one enticing 'lot' would on that occasion fetch two rupees. At another similar auction I remember half-pounds of tobacco going for five rupees each, and one-rupee packets of 'Three Castles' cigarettes also for five rupees.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE END OF THE CROSSING: THE 'CHIT' IN TIBET

THE Sappers and Miners, the coolis, the boatmen, the various units employed on fatigue, and the mule drivers must have been heartily glad when the crossing was all over. We were leaving both yaks and donkeys behind here (to work with convoys between Gyantse and Chaksam), so that we did not have to accomplish the feat of embarking and disembarking these somewhat clumsy animals; but even so, the amount of labour that had been involved was immense. I am told that, at any rate in Indian frontier warfare, there has hitherto been no instance of a force of this size crossing a river of this

dimension without the aid of a pontoon bridge (the materials for which it would have been impossible on this occasion to carry with us). Further, the actual breadth of the river gave no idea of the difficulty of crossing it. The swiftness of the current, the whirlpools, and the speed with which the river, fed as it was by mountain streams, rose and fell, constituted the main difficulties. Further, in addition to the main channel which was the chief obstacle, there was a second channel beyond it, which, though not wide and sometimes fordable, constituted an additional delay to the crossing. As the last boatload crossed, the river was rising fast, and I am told that the amount of spare material left at the ends of the long rope, which was the main factor in swinging the large boats across without letting them drift down-stream, could be measured by the inch. Another inch or so in the rise of the river, and a corresponding widening of the stream, would have left that rope all too short for the work it had to

accomplish, and our crossing might have been indefinitely delayed, for afterwards the river still continued rising.

We left the Tsangpo fairly well stocked with provisions. During the march of forty-five miles to Lhassa we were informed that we should come across all that we required. The road from North Chaksam followed the course of the river for three miles; then, taking a sharp turn to the left, entered another wide valley watered by another river, the course of which we were to trace up-stream as far as Lhassa.

On the first day out of Chaksam I had rather an amusing experience of the value set by a Tibetan on a 'chit' written by a British officer. In this respect the Tibetan out-herods Herod. India is the land of the 'chit.' The word is an abbreviation of 'chitthi,' a letter, and in its shortened form is specially applied to a certificate of good character given to a servant or to any pass in guarantee of respectability on any simple

recognition of services rendered. A native barber in India who has cut your hair three times will ask for a 'chit' as a guarantee that he has done so. But the Tibetan, whether sophisticated lama or simple peasant, was even more susceptible to the charms of a 'chit,' those charms of course possessing for him something of the mystical, since he never understood its contents. Any 'chit' was apparently regarded as a sort of talisman, and was displayed by the owner with pride and confidence to every one, especially the next British officer who comes this way.

On that day I was sent ahead with the advance guard to see what supplies each village contained. I had no transport with me nor means of collecting the supplies, and through an oversight had taken no one with me to send back with messages to the rear as to the result of my discoveries in each village. There was no use in telling a villager to point out to the officer who would come after me what stores I had unearthed;

for the villagers, though well paid, would always evade supplying stores if possible. The only expedient left was to make use of those charms which were possessed by the 'chit.' In the first village I found fifty maunds of tsampa; so, solemnly taking out my pocket book, I wrote on a leaf of it 'fifty maunds of tsampa in a top-room of the house with the big red door,' and, tearing this out of the book, presented it with grave dignity to the owner of the house. At the next villages I acted similarly. Some hours after I reached camp the officer in charge of the transport that had been detailed for foraging reached camp in due possession of my fifty maunds of tsampa and all the other articles that I had enumerated in the subsequent chits. It had turned out exactly as I had hoped. That officer had entered the various villages in turn, and the proud possessors of the chits, innocent of their real purport, had come up to him and presented them with childlike simplicity for him to read,

and of course they had given him just the information which they did not want to give him, but which he required, and which I had had no other means of conveying to him.

It was playing it rather low down perhaps, but, after all, we wanted the supplies.

CHAPTER XIX

MONASTERIES : FORAGING IN MONASTERIES : A DREAM

THERE were at least two fair-sized monasteries which during the next few days we visited to obtain supplies. Monasteries seem to vary in character as they vary in size. Buddhism seems, in fact, to have left its mark upon Tibet in the manner of some great flood. Here on a lone hilltop stands a tiny monastery stagnant, like some small post left by the flood, the monks few in number, their persons sordid, their minds vacant, and what remains of their religion stale or even polluted ; while elsewhere in larger monasteries religion is clearer and more vital, and life less stagnant. This is a pure generalisation, and doubtless

men, holy after their lights, often live in remote hovels, and in the chiefer centres religion may often be dreamy or callous, and sordid vices be not unknown. But perhaps, merely as a generalisation, the above may hold good.

A foraging visit to a monastery was often marked by several phases, in which the relations between visitor and visited underwent considerable change. The officer in charge of the foraging party would ride up to the monastery with his escort. They would have been seen coming, and after a few signs of hurrying and preparation and the fluttering of several red monastic skirts in the breeze, a small select deputation of monks would descend from the main building to meet the intruders. This deputation would first and foremost bring with it a white muslin rag as an emblem of peace. Along with the rag would be carried peace-offerings, of which the most common would be a tray of whole-wheat parched and salted, or a small

basket of eggs, which, on nearer acquaintance later in the day, would usually be found to be neither new-laid nor fresh, but simply 'eggs.'

With the aid of an interpreter a pleasant conversation would ensue. The officer would then probably produce his hand-camera and snapshot the head lama, after which he would try to get to business. He would ask how much of such and such article the monastery could sell us. The monks would shake their heads, flutter their skirts, jerk up their thumbs, and in a shrill falsetto repeat the word 'Menduk' (which means 'nothing'). After a little more parley they would confess to having, say, twenty bagfuls of tsampa or whatever was required. Even the naming of a high rate and the jingling of a bag of rupees in their faces would not make them raise the above figure. You would then, if you were the officer, proceed within the monastery and demand to be shown the said twenty bagfuls. You would be led with great pomp and cir-

cumstance upstairs and along dark passages and past rows of cells till you were ushered into a small pantry or storeroom, where, with a gesture of pompous satisfaction at having so completely fulfilled your requirements, the head monk would point to a few handfuls of tsampa lying at the bottom of a small elongated wooden trough. You would feel a little annoyance at this, and show signs of it. The head monk, as by a happy inspiration, would suddenly beckon you to accompany him, and, after another long meandering through the monastery, would lead you to a large doorway into a large darkened hall, which, when your eyes became accustomed to the dim light, you would recognise as the main 'gompa' or temple of the monastery. Here his hand would steal into yours, which he would caress, while with his free hand he pointed to the chief image of Buddha, which he was apparently wishing you to admire. Of course you admired him, but you wanted tsampa, and this was obviously merely a ruse

to detain you from your quest. British choler would then rise, and, going out of the temple with somewhat irreverent haste, you would begin to express yourself forcibly in terms which you made the interpreter translate. The interpreter had probably an axe of his own to grind, and it was doubtful how many of your trenchant phrases, even if fit to repeat in a monastery, got actually translated. But after a great show of meaning business, and a few threats of stronger measures in the background, you probably got, say, fifty maunds of tsampa from a proper storeroom which the lamas had previously refrained from showing you. A little later a few more threats and the threatening crack of a whip round the head of a 'chela' or two would send the monks all skipping about in trepidation, and the door of the main storeroom would be opened to you, in which you would find, it might be, two hundred maunds (or three days' supply for the force) of the desired article. After this you were all friends. No

ill-will was borne on either side. The junior monks or 'chelas' would assist in bagging the flour, and in carrying it down to the place where the mules were waiting for it. The money would be doled out and counted with the greatest good humour, there would be another proffer of parched wheat and rotten eggs, and you would depart with the head lama's blessing.

After one such visit I dreamed a dream. I knocked in a boisterous swash-buckling manner at Tom Gate, the main gate of my old college—Christ Church. Beside me, stretching up St. Aldate's to Carfax, were a string of pack mules, fitted with empty bags, forage nets, and loading ropes. The gate was opened by those of the porters whom I knew years ago. One, an old soldier, saluted me. Then it occurred to me that I was a Japanese officer, and that in the year 2004 the Japanese army were invading England. I was at the head of a foraging party, and we had come to loot the House. We had a fine

time. We started of course by ringing up the Dean. He too blessed me, and when I asked him for some of that old Burgundy that I know was a speciality of the senior common-room cellar, he showed me round the cathedral and pointed out the restored shrine of St. Frideswide. This was not what I wanted, and I told him so. I brought the mules in from outside, and set them to graze on the neat plots of turf that encircle 'Mercury' the fountain, and told him they must all go away laden with the good things of the Christ Church larder and cellar, at which he protested. Some undergraduates emerged in cap and gown from a lecture room and began to show fight. We drove them into Peckwater at the point of the bayonet.

Then the Steward and the Junior Censor appeared, and the latter began to reason with us in what I considered a tone unbecoming to a private person resident in an invaded

country. I raised a heavy knout which I carried, and was going to flog the Junior Censor where he stood, when the Steward intervened, and, giving hurried orders to all the scouts and porters that stood around watching the scene, soon produced the finest store of provisions that we had met with in all our campaigning. The mules were marched out of Tom Gate, up St. Aldate's, along the Corn and out to Port Meadow, where we were encamped, laden with sirloins of beef, with turkeys, with geese and ducks and fowls and pheasants, with beer in the barrel and port wine in the case, while I remember taking special personal possession of a mould of 'aspic of larks' which I fancied for my supper.

But then I woke, and by doing so felt done out of that aspic of larks, which would have been a pleasant change from the fare of those days.

Quite a silly dream of course; but on

recalling it with my waking thoughts, and feeling sympathy for the Dean and students of Christ Church, I felt some too for those poor lamas whom we had invaded the day before.

CHAPTER XX

REACHING LHASSA: SUPPLIES: MESSING: THE LHASSA BAZAAR

THE mode of our arrival in the environs of Lhassa was something of an anti-climax. We had marched four hundred miles, fought a few fights, and provided ourselves throughout our journey with the necessaries of life, much against the will of the enemy, and here we were at Lhassa, where an exciting climax to our march, such as a good fight in the Lhassa plain, would have been highly artistic. Here stood the Debun monastery, and there further on the Sara monastery, full of monks who at that time hated us. A few good shells in those monasteries would have set the monks buzzing in consternation

like swarming bees disturbed. There glistened in the sun the gilded roof of the chief astrologer's house, that would have made grand loot and have looked so well in the British Museum. There ahead of us rose majestically on its conical hill the Potá-Là, that *pièce de résistance* which would have really taxed our efforts, and by its side on a similar hill the Medical College, challenging us by its proud eminence to seize it. But such wild schemes were not to be realised. These ways were not our ways. We marched quietly into a swampy camp, sat down, and began to negotiate. Those that negotiated were busy men, for the amount of talking that the representatives of the Tibetan Government got through, and that needed listening to, before anything was settled, must have been immense. The rest of us were not often very busy. 'Those also serve who only stand and wait' was our motto.

There was reluctance at first on the part of the monasteries to sell us supplies, but

this was shortly overcome. We had for one day to feed the natives of the force on peas soaked overnight in water as a substitute for tsampa, while waiting for supplies to come in; but from the time when the latter began to do so till we left Lhassa we felt no pinch. The large monasteries were our chief purveyors, but besides these the Chinese community of Lhassa comprised certain considerable merchants who at the instigation of the Amban placed their wares at our disposal from the very first. A Chinese market was a great boon to us, for the Chinaman, especially if at all influenced by other civilisations, has ideas on dietetics more nearly approximating to both those of the British and of the native of India than do the Tibetan's idea. To the ordinary Tibetan the sucking of mouthfuls of tsampa at irregular intervals from a dirty leather bag which he hangs from his neck represents an adequate idea of diet. The monks and richer laymen of course do themselves better; but such dainties as they indulge

in did not appeal to our palates, nor to those of Indian natives. Their butter, for instance, which at times both British and native had to make use of, had always a special flavour of its own—a flavour which in an indefinable way suggests Tibet and its many associations, being allied to a blend of such smells as that of Tibetan fuel, of joss-stick incense, and of temple floors smeared with grease. Few Europeans and fewer natives could eat Tibetan butter with relish. The Chinaman, on the other hand, provided us with flour sufficiently fine to bake with, with white and brown sugar, with that solidified form of molasses called 'goor,' and with dried fruits. Latterly we had often had to mix tsampa with flour to eke out our stock of the latter when baking bread for British troops. The result, though not unwholesome, was of a deep brown colour, and hardly palatable. If once cut into overnight, a tsampa loaf would have subsided into something very stodgy by morning, though, if all con-

sumed at a sitting, it would not be found so heavy.

During the latter part of our march we had run out of most of such delicacies as a supply column usually carries, and, as I have already mentioned, no arrangement could be made to bring up the loads and loads of parcels which were now accumulating at Gyantse for most individuals and messes belonging to the column. In those days, in our attitude towards food, we reverted very much to the proverbial school-boy. We were frankly greedy in thought, word, and deed. The most favourite of interesting conversations was to discuss the ideal menu at a first-rate London restaurant. But sometimes these imaginings grew too painful. I remember well a case of two officers at noon on a comparatively hot day, sitting by the way-side at a halt.

'Ah,' said one, 'what I should really like now would be a large tumblerful of good iced hock-cup.'

These idle words touched a tender spot in the other officer, to whom hock-cup happened to be the beau-ideal of drinks.

'Shut up!' the latter answered angrily, a fierce light in his eye; 'if you mention hock-cup again, I'll break your head!'

Jam, as we marched to Lhassa, though not a necessity, was our primary desideratum. With long days in the open air and also with considerable fatigue to undergo, you craved for the sustenance of sweet things. Till sugar also began to run short, we used to make treacle from it. Like the school-boy, we, as a rule, thought little of alcohol. Just as water at that altitude boils at a low temperature, so did it need only a little fiery spirit to give the desired tingle to the blood. Most messes had soon run out of whiskey, and rum in small quantities from the supply column took its place.

I am inclined to think that, delightful as messing in a large mess is, something is lost by having no personal share in your own

catering. A mess president, of course, especially on service, has a vast weight upon his shoulders. He has to foresee the wants of many hungry mouths months ahead, and fit them in to a scanty allowance of transport. But his function is of a special kind. The ordinary member of a mess simply eats what is put before him, notes whether it is good, bad, or indifferent, and thinks no more about it. On the other hand, if, with the aid of a purely experimental cook, you run your own messing, quite a new vista of energy is at once opened out to you. It becomes intensely interesting. You become very greedy, of course, and a good dinner becomes the mark of a successful day, and a bad dinner that of an unsuccessful one; but even so the arts of catering and of the supervision of cooking, when practised in difficulties, are not in themselves sordid, but demand skill and forethought of a high order. One wants company of course. I messed on the method of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Spratt

with another officer. He was of the lean, I the fat kind. He breakfasted at eleven, or (if on the march) when he reached camp. I ate a huge breakfast the moment I was out of bed, and ran to a lunch later, which my messmate scorned. So, after all, we only met at dinner, but then that is the only meal at which company is a necessity. He dined usually on curry and rice, which I have always disliked, while I had roast meat served up to me in chunks on a dish, much as my dog gets it at home. Thus we got all the mutual advantages of each other's company when that was desirable, without the effort of subscribing to each other's tastes. We found it a most workmanlike arrangement. When, on reaching Lhassa, we had ample leisure, we began to grow fastidious, and to insist upon our cooks enlarging the culinary horizon. A little harsh treatment soon taught the youth who fed me to turn out a passable omelette, and a little more coercion resulted in quite eatable

rissoles. In the end, when he came to take orders for dinner, he would rattle off a string of high-sounding dishes with French names, which would have really made a fine feast, if served otherwise than on enamelled iron plates, set upon a table cloth of advertisement sheets from a stale newspaper. Once I had a comrade to lunch on a sunny day, and, thinking to do him well, produced somewhere from the bottom of my kit a long disused but spotless bed sheet, and made use of this as a table cloth. My friend asked for its removal before the second course, complaining of incipient snow-blindness. When I got to India and to polite society, and began wiping my mouth with a table napkin, I discovered that on the first few occasions the napkin used to come away in my pocket. Of course, on making use of it, one thought subconsciously that it was one's handkerchief, and so tucked it away as such.

Tobacco, without a parcels post to bring it to us, became very scarce. The Sahib

missed his pipe or cheroot, and the native his 'hubble-bubble,' and both alike took to the "Pedro' cigarette, the produce of an enterprising firm whose custom extended to Lhassa. Vendors of Pedros had followed us on the march, and, apart from this, the Lhassa bazaar abounded in the article, getting it, I suppose, through China or by the trade route that lies through Nepal. By a rough estimate it would appear that for two months at least four thousand souls smoked an average of ten Pedros daily. The rate grew very much enhanced with the constant demand, and I know of one needy officer who, in view of the fortune thus doubtless made by the firm, has announced his intention of going head-down for home and offering his hand and heart to Miss Pedro, if he finds such a person existing.

Shopping in the camp bazaar was the ladylike way in which we often spent our mornings. We had only been in camp at Lhassa for twenty-four hours, when a bazaar

was formed just outside camp by Tibetan, Chinese, and Nepali traders. It needed a little supervision to prevent disputes and disorder, but the provost-marshal quickly had it in hand. An attempt to fix rates for various more necessary articles was not wholly successful, human nature on the buyer's part crying out for the article at all cost, and human nature on the seller's seizing an easy chance of profit. There were vegetables in that bazaar and sticks of wild rhubarb. There was 'ata,' in small quantities, which the sepoy would buy greedily as a change from his tsampa. There were packets of white loaf sugar fetching exorbitant prices, and thick Chinese candles with bits of stick for wicks. Later on, when we had moved from our first camp to that which we occupied for the greater part of the time, the bazaar developed. The vendors by that time had discovered our childish mania for curios, and brought with them each morning such trinkets as would attract our fancy. Skins of all

kinds would be brought for sale; the skins of very young lambs, almost as curly as real Astrakan, which, made up together in winter linings for lamas' robes, seemed equally adaptable to the opera cloaks of our sisters and cousins and aunts at home; skins too of the lynx, the marmot, the wolf, and the snow fox. And women would come wearing heavy earrings set with turquoises and 'charm boxes' similarly set, which they wore as lockets at the neck. They would take these off to sell to you and haggle, like the veritable Eastern traders that they were, with you for the price.

Besides the Tibetan or Chinese candle, we also found imported candles of European manufacture. But most imports for household use appeared to be Japanese, as, for instance, soap and matches; neither of these were of good quality, and Japan does not seem to take pains to appear at her best in the Lhassa market. But to get a new cake of soap, even if it did crumble away quickly, was a luxury, and the return to a land of

matches was a great relief. I remember an officer who on the march had latterly possessed himself of a Tibetan flint and steel and learnt to light a cigarette with them.

There are just about half a dozen prime necessities of no great bulk which always seem to run out sooner than expected on field service. A reserve in a supply column of the following would always come in useful: of matches, three mule loads; of wax candles, seven mule loads; of soap, ten mule loads; of some strong forbidding kind of tobacco that in times of privation would go a very long way, ten mule loads; of chocolate creams and barley sugar, thirty mule loads. Sixty such mules laid out per brigade would be much blessed.

When relations with the Tibetans had become less strained, we used to go in organised parties to visit the bazaar in Lhassa city itself. These parties reminded one of a Sunday-school treat. The part of curate would be played by some field-officer who

would collect his school children outside camp. These would consist of those officers, soldiers, sepoys, and followers whose turn it was to go. He would conduct us with careful supervision from the camp to the city, and there let us loose for two hours to play in the bazaar. The bazaar was one circular street, surrounding the cathedral which, though once or twice entered by favoured individuals, was out of bounds for us.

In the city the same kinds of things were for sale as were brought to the camp bazaar, but there was a larger variety of imported goods. How some of those things ever got to Lhassa was a mystery. In one shop I saw a whole row of small looking-glasses 'made in Austria,' and beside them a score or so of penknives 'made in Germany.' The British tradesman's pictorial almanac will, I suppose, be found hanging on the gates of the new Jerusalem; it had certainly penetrated Lhassa, usually in the form of a royal family group. One coronation group on the

wall of a Kashmiri shop was especially fine. Strangest of all to find was a bicycle of the Rover pattern—quite out of gear, but doubtless interesting to the Tibetan as a Western curio. He may have thought it was a species of Christian prayer-wheel.

I was short of dinner plates, and bought one. It was of tin, and had stamped on it a comprehensive lesson in both political and physical geography. All round the rim faces of clocks were stamped. Each face was encircled with a scroll containing the name and the number of the population of some large city of the world, while the clock in the centre showed what the time was in that city when the clock in London stood at twelve noon. The population of London as stamped on the plate stood at quite a low figure, but London was selected as the honoured city whose clock should stand at the precise hour of noon, and the whole geography lesson was in English. One would therefore come to the conclusion that the plate was a British

product, dating back to the period of some not very recent census. To have traced that plate from Birmingham to Lhassa would have been interesting.

Beggars swarmed in the bazaar. One man earned an obviously ample livelihood by carrying his grandfather on his back through the streets. The grandfather was certainly the quintessence of decrepitude, and as such would appeal to the benevolent, who apparently never thought of suggesting to the young man that it would be better to leave grandfather at home in bed, and go out unencumbered to earn an honest living. Malefactors in chains are also seen crawling about, a peripatetic prison being apparently less felt by the Lhassa exchequer than one of bricks and mortar.

CHAPTER XXI

ENOUGH OF LHASSA: A TRIP DOWN COUNTRY: LIFE IN A POST: TRUE HOSPITALITY: A BHUTYA PONY

SINCE I reached India, I have been told that every moment I spent in the romantic environs of Lhassa must have been intensely interesting, and that to have been to Lhassa is the envy of the world. I suppose, like the brute one is, one got *blasé* and indifferent to one's good fortune, but it is certain that those 'crowded hours of glorious life' began to pall. We did the best we could to while away the time. An energetic race committee provided gymkhanas and a 'ski-meeting' (just, says the intelligent foreigner, what a British army *would* indulge in, on arrival at such a place).

A football tournament followed. Football at thirteen thousand feet is like playing the game at an ordinary level—with an eighty-pound load on your back. Less strain on the lungs was a rifle meeting. To escort our military or political betters to the city on a state visit was another mild form of entertainment. The Chinese Amban often received such visits. The ordinary officer who formed part of the escort did not take part in the actual visit. He stayed outside on the doorsteps. Sometimes he was known to go into the Amban's kitchen, where an elderly matron gave him a cup of tea.

Luckily, though it rained generally once in the twenty-four hours, it did so mostly at night, so that we were seldom confined to our tents in the daytime. Even so, we felt rather like prisoners. Going out beyond the vicinity of the camp meant going out armed, and proceeding to any distance meant being accompanied by an escort, such precautions having been specially indicated by the attack

made on two officers by a certain fanatical lama.

It is not surprising that the life we led left many gaps which it was hard to fill. I was glad when one day I got orders to go on a ten days' trip down the line as far as Pete-jong and back.

These ten days initiated me into the life of those portions of the force who had been left to man posts on the line of communications.

The native soldier soon makes himself very much at home in his post. He has deeply regretted not going to the front, but with a useful belief in 'kismet' makes the best of things. The relief from marching and the ample leisure to cook food are redeeming features. The post-commandant, if the only British officer on the spot, feels his circumstances more acutely. Not only does he grieve at being left behind, but since in ordinary times no life is more social than that of a British officer, he at first feels his loneli-

ness greatly. He may love his men, he may be —in the wording of that common Hindustani metaphor—veritably their 'father and mother,' but still he cannot go to them for company. He can exchange few ideas with them, and as regards social intercourse, he is almost as much alone as if he were on a desert island. If, however, by any chance there are two officers together in one post, they should enjoy themselves. For though ordinary regimental life is, as I said above, the most social in the world, it yet also suffers from the disabilities of its own sociability. In a regimental mess you know twenty men well, and may go on knowing them so for twenty years, but perhaps you will never know any one of them really intimately. To share a post on the line of communications with one other officer for a few months should result in an intimacy. That is almost a new military experience.

If a post-commandant had shooting or fishing within reach of his post, he usually,

even though alone, soon found life bearable. Sometimes foraging to collect a reserve of rations for the march down was his only recreation, and this soon palled. He was not necessarily always alone, for the traffic up and down the line was sometimes brisk, and he would perhaps once or twice in a week be invaded by some officer who was travelling up or down with the post or with a convoy.

It was my lot to be often such an invader, and for sheer genuine hospitality commend me to the officers in charge of the posts on the Sikkim–Tibet line of communications. It shames me to think of the way they have entertained me, and of my utter inability to return their hospitality. May I have a chance some time!

I had to go down to Chaksam with the mounted infantry postal escort which travelled the whole distance in one day, going as light as possible, my syce on one mule, my bedding on a second, and a mule driver on a third, and without either cook

or orderly. It was a case of 'sponging' wherever I went, for I knew those kind hosts down the line would forbid me to live off bully-beef and biscuits. Looking over my belongings before I left, I found a tinned ox-tongue, which by an oversight had remained unregarded and uneaten somewhere at the bottom of a kit bag for many months. A convoy too had just come in, and from it I seized one of a few pots of jam. Thus armed I visited Chaksam and Pete-jong. These two articles were all that I could proffer in return for hospitality, but both under present conditions were dainty rarities, and, my hosts assured me, quite paid for my keep. At Chaksam, where the tongue was left, and where there was a doctor as well as a post-commandant, I was afterwards informed that the doctor, as soon as I was gone, promptly found the post-commandant suffering from acute enteritis, so put him on to milk diet and wolfed all the tongue himself!

The postal service from Gyantse to

Lhassa was performed by mounted infantry, each garrison *en route* containing a detachment of mounted infantrymen, who took the post from stage to stage. The stages were pretty far apart. The first was from Gyantse to Raling, over thirty miles; the second over the Karo-Là to Nagartse; a distance of nearly thirty; the third from Nagartse to Pete-jong, eighteen miles; the fourth from Pete-jong to Chaksam, thirty-two; and the fifth and last from Chaksam to Lhassa, about forty-five. The work thus done by the mounted infantry between Lhassa and Gyantse was considerable. A fairly hefty sepoy, carrying rifle and accoutrements and a few mail bags, is no mean weight to put on the back of a thirteen-hand pony, even for a short distance, and it is surprising how well the ponies, some of them ordinary country-breds from the plains of India, stood those long marches. Keeping them shod was a considerable difficulty, for the combination of damp weather and

stony roads knocked the shoes off very quickly, and the stock of the latter was limited.

Having done my work at Chaksam and Pete-jong, I returned to the former place with the post prepaid to proceed to Lhassa the next day; but it had been raining in torrents for some days past, and, though mail bags and the like could be taken across the river in skin boats, there was no chance of taking my pony and mules across till the flood subsided. After three days it was found possible to take the animals over at Parte (the crossing which the column subsequently used on the march down), ten miles up the river, and the following day I was able to reach Lhassa with the upward post.

I shall not easily forget that day. It has been made memorable to me by the vagaries of a certain Bhutya pony ridden by an officer who was accompanying me. To get one's kit and oneself over forty-five miles of indifferent roadway in one day,

especially when you have no change of mount, involves early rising. We got up at four o'clock, after sleeping in the domestic temple of a Tibetan farm-house on a sacred but not very clean floor. We sent our kit on ahead, and also my syce, who was mounted on a mule, in charge of part of the mounted infantry postmen. The remainder of the latter accompanied our two selves a little later. My companion had not ridden his pony for some time, and the latter, disliking the process of being mounted, began by suddenly sidling away when his master was only half on his back, with the result that his master came off and tumbled to the ground, still keeping hold of the reins. The pony, anxious to be free, danced a jig on his master's stomach. Luckily, being of a hard-footed hill-breed, his feet were not shod, so that no serious injury resulted, as would have been the case if the trampling had been done in iron shoes. At length the pony broke away from the reins and scampered off,

leaving his rider to recover the breath that had been squeezed out of his body and to pick himself up. This was an awkward beginning to the day's march, but, finding no bones broken, and the pony having, for the occasion, allowed himself to be caught, my friend mounted, successfully this time, and we proceeded on our way. After some miles we overtook and passed the other party, and pushed on till, finding we had gone twenty miles from Chaksam, were in a pleasant spot suitable for resting in, and were uncommonly hungry, we dismounted, took our ponies' bridles off, tied the animals up, gave them their grain, and set to work upon our own sandwiches.

We rested an hour, and, thinking our surroundings too pleasant to leave abruptly, we decided on another half-hour's rest. Just as we had done so, and were looking forward to a spell of peaceful contemplation of romantic scenery, as seen through the beautifying haze of tobacco-

smoke, one of us noticed that the Bhutya was fidgeting with his head rope. He was on the edge of a field of green peas that were tickling his fancy. As we looked, by some device known only, I should think, to Bhutya ponies, he slipped the neck rope over one ear. Before we could get at him he had slipped it over the other and was free. The only man who had ever been known to catch the pony when he was free was his own syce, whom his master had left at Chaksam. Here we were twenty miles from Chaksam and twenty-five from Lhassa, and my friend with many bruises on his body already contracted that morning, and a sore hip that, though not preventing him riding, yet hurt him every time that he tried to walk.

The party that we had overtaken now came up, and, after sending on most of the escort so as not to detain His Majesty's mails, we proceeded to try all the dodges known to us of catching a refractory pony. I suppose, if we had been cowboys trained to

use the lasso, we should have had no trouble. As it was, we experienced much.

A feeding-bag full of grain held out coaxingly at arm's length made the pony laugh. I tried him with a bit of commissariat biscuit, at which—as is often the way of people—he snorted. I tried stalking him from behind my own pony, and got fairly near him, only to find his two heels perilously near our two heads. We laid a grand snare, in the shape of two mule loading ropes joined together, and stretched across a tempting patch of the green-pea field, where not a trace of the rope could be seen, while the men at each end of the rope lounged peacefully and innocently with reassuring looks upon their faces which we thought would not prevent the pony being quietly urged into the space between them. This ruse nearly succeeded. The pony stalked along, grazing as he went, till his feet were against the rope, at which the men holding it, after raising it a little, tried to run to the rear and so encircle

the pony. But before they had gone far he was kicking and tugging with his chest against the rope, and in a moment had wrenched it out of the hands of one of the men, and the next minute, after a series of derisive buckjumps, was in the next field munching young wheat.

After fifty minutes of fruitless manœuvring we decided on a new plan. Half a mile further on, the road left the open space where we now were, and, running close to the side of the river, was flanked on the other side by almost precipitous rocks. The road here, therefore, formed a perfect defile, and we decided to proceed on our way, ignoring the Bhutya and trusting to his gregarious instinct and a little wholesome neglect on our part to induce him to follow us of his own initiative. We moved off in a body—mules, ponies, and men. The Bhutya, tired of green peas and young wheat, looked after us and followed us at a gentle trot. We left my syce in ambush just outside the defile, but this proved

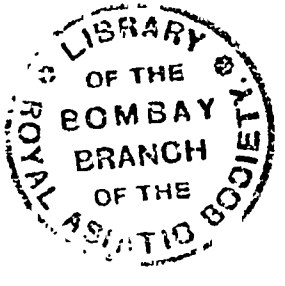
unnecessary ; for the pony, now quite anxious about being left behind, pushed his way in ahead of the last mounted infantryman, so that at last we had him in a trap. But to catch hold of him, now that he was in the trap, still taxed our efforts. A mounted infantryman grabbed him once by the forelock, and nearly got wrenched off his own pony by doing so, while the Bhutya leapt away, leaving in the man's hand enough of his own forelock to stuff a good pincushion. My syce had now come up. He was an elderly man, more intelligent in these matters than any of those present. He tempted the pony with bits of a tsampa chapatti that he drew from his pocket. The pony, forgetful of wheat and green peas, took to these. The syce in an instant had the reins of the bridle round the pony's neck, and would have held him fast had not he been lifted off his feet by the latter's rearing up. The pony was now free again and very indignant.

Rampaging about, he tried to find an exit through a batch of mules in one direction and a batch of mounted infantry in the other, but found himself baffled in both. He looked up the rocks and found them impossible to climb, looked at the river beneath him and seemed to contemplate taking a header, but thought better of it, and at last stood sullenly at bay. My syce's next proffer of his own wayside ration brought the pony to terms. A rope-twitch was round his lip in an instant, and a moment later he stood bridled and in his right mind.

So on we hastened to Lhassa at last, glad to have secured the pony, but now somewhat belated. At Trelung bridge, eight miles out of Lhassa, was a small garrison, guarding the bridge. The officer in command fed us with a sumptuous tea. Much refreshed, we sped on our way, getting within sight of camp just as it was turning pitch dark, and having cause to realise the efficacy of our own camp

defences by the way we floundered among ditches and abattis when barely twenty yards from the camp perimeter.

There was a 'Tommies' gaff' that night, outside the camp, around a roughly erected stage lit up with Chinese candles and decked out with green brushwood that had previously been used to make the jumps at the last gymkhana. We assembled to hear the familiar types of songs that form the programme of a soldiers' sing-song—some witty, some rather vulgar, some modified with topical variations by local poets, and all full of good cheer.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CHAPTER XXII

THE SIGNING OF THE TREATY

A DAY or two after—that is to say, on the seventh day of September 1904—the treaty was signed. If our peaceful arrival at Lhassa had been the anti-climax of the Expedition, this—the signing of the treaty—though peaceful also, was its true climax. One certainly did have a feeling that day that one was witness of an event of imperial importance.

The escort left camp at 1.30 P.M. Over the assembling of the troops outside camp one of those typical—and to the onlooker highly entertaining—muddles arose, which are always either the fault of some one or no one or every one. Eventually we found ourselves, all except a body of mounted

infantry who were still unaccountably missing. Their place was, however, adequately filled by a party of Kot-duffadars of mule corps, who, mounted on transport riding ponies, and armed with swords and staves or whatever obsolete weapon is nowadays issued to them, took a prominent place in the procession and made a brave show. We marched past that pleasant country seat known as 'Paradise,' where the political mission had their quarters, and proceeded along a path lined with troops, across a bog into the outskirts of the city, and up the road which leads up the Potá-Là hill into the Potá-Là. We had eventually to dismount, leave our ponies, and climb up a paved pathway, half staircase. This pathway was smeared with the holy grease of ages and was dangerously slippery. At the top we found some of the guard of the Nepalese resident, looking very warlike in red secondhand tunics that had once been the property of British soldiers, but were of a now obsolete pattern. Ushered through a

dark passage, we entered at last into the throne-room or audience-hall of the Potá-Là, where the ceremony was to take place. When all that portion of the escort who were allowed within the hall had taken their places Colonel Younghusband and General Macdonald with their respective Staffs arrived. The room already held the various contingents of Eastern officials of different nationalities who were to assist at the function. After we had all stood up, there was a great deal of handshaking between the representatives of East and West. The Chinese Amban shakes hands in a manner that, when last I frequented London drawing-rooms, was, I believe, considered fashionable. One of the lay council of Tibet certainly thought so, for he tried to imitate the particular method, but only partially succeeded. The party then sat down to tea. A great deal of tea was drunk—that milkless tea in handleless china cups with which we had most of us now become acquainted. All sorts of

Chinese sweetmeats were provided with it, and these were followed by cigarettes (our old friend the 'Pedro'). These dainties did not extend into the outer circles; those of us who were behind contented ourselves by lighting up our own Pedros.

A glance round the room showed many bright colours and striking contrasts. There, near to the throne, were our political officers in the rich but not gaudy uniform of their service; next them the G.O.C. and his Staff in the sober khaki, while all round the room in less prominent places was more khaki. But next to Colonel Younghusband in robes of bright blue silk sat the Amban. Next to the Amban was the Regent, who, since the disappearance of the Dalai Lama, had been the officiating head of the Tibetan Government, an elderly man with a sad ascetic face, and dressed quite simply in the plain red robes of an ordinary lama. Next to him was a row of Chinese officials, of whose uniform, as in the case of the Amban,

bright blue silk formed the chief part. Further away were the seats of the Nepalese contingent, at the head of whom sat the Nepali resident, a fierce-looking old man in a rather shabby and uncommonly short jacket of plum-coloured brocade lined with fur. Alongside, but at a different angle and facing the throne, sat the Tonsil Penlop and his suite. These represented Bhutan and were all clad in striped yellow silk robes, which one can only describe as barbaric. Their millinery was also marvellous, the Tonsil Penlop himself wearing a kind of bonnet, on the top of which was perched a whole stuffed bird, which in the distance appeared to be a parrot. Immediately opposite the throne were the Tibetan lay council of three. They affected plain yellow silk and yellow hats, but the yellow was of a bright shade, and the general effect of their appearance was as magnificent as that of any of the others. In face they struck me as the least attractive of the various Eastern officials present, being

unhealthy-looking, rather fat, and wearing what seemed a sulky cowed expression. Behind them stood a whole array of monks.

The process of signing began almost at once. The number of documents seemed never ending. Apparently there were several copies of the treaty in every language spoken by any of the parties directly or remotely concerned with it, and every one of these copies had to be signed, not only by the chief authorities above enumerated, but also by various lesser lights of Tibet, as, for instance, the heads of certain monasteries. At one period the limelight flashed upon us, and we all had our photographs taken from a corner of the room.

We saw many copies of the treaty being signed with great care, but gathered nothing of its contents except from the speech which, when at last the signing was over, Colonel Younghusband addressed to the Tibetans in general, and to the 'council of three' in particular. The latter sat bobbing their heads

deferentially at each sentence, and looking thoroughly ashamed while Colonel Younghusband addressed them from his chair. The speech was translated sentence by sentence into Tibetan for Tibetan benefit, and afterwards passed on in Chinese to the Amban.

The speech was emphatically a 'straight talk,' the key-note seeming to be that the Tibetans had been very foolish in opposing and flouting us in the past, but that they were now going to be good boys. They were going to be well treated when they came to visit us, and were not going to misbehave themselves in any way, should we again come near them. There was more said, about trade relations with India, in recognition of the Chinese suzerainty, and in encouragement of the Tibetan traditional methods of treating outsiders, when those outsiders did not happen to be ourselves.

The council of three seemed to take it all 'lying down.'

More tea was drunk: the press correspondents busied themselves with the telegrams that they were sending down by post to Gyantse, bringing the wires there and then to the press censor, whose blue pencil I saw freely wielded: more handshaking, and then the party broke up.

As we left the now close atmosphere of the audience hall, we felt that we had just witnessed a matinée performance in a theatre. The spectacular effects throughout had been impressive. The first act had been brisk, the second had dragged, but the last had been thrilling. It had indeed been a fine play that we had seen enacted—the simple sane perseverance of British diplomacy fighting on its own ground a unique section of the mysterious and gorgeous East, not bluffed by its indignant protests, not deceived by its spurious promises, not wearied by its endless delays, not impatient of its crass ignorance, but gaining its objects slowly and surely, and coming out victorious.

CHAPTER XXIII

BACK TO INDIA

THEREAFTER, like the man in the sycamore tree, we made haste to come down. Sixteen days later the column left Lhassa. A few functions intervened, such as the formal release of our prisoners and the bestowal of money in charity on the poor of Lhassa. I missed these functions, having been sent on ahead to the Tsangpo, where preparations for the return crossing were now afoot. The column at length arrived at the river. We crossed this time at Parte, where a certain single channel of moderate breadth, but very deep and therefore not very swift, served our purposes far better than the double channel at Chaksam. The Sappers and Miners and

coolis had made all things ready, towing the two heavy ferry boats up many miles of swift current, and rigging up the mysterious engineering paraphernalia which were needed to swing us across, our crossing being truly and literally on a thread—a thread of thin wire. Wire, at once the lightest and strongest commodity of its kind, had since our last crossing been sent up to us, in great quantities, and was largely used to replace the now rotten rope that had previously been chiefly employed. A great ferry boat, bearing twenty mules, to which was attached a string of skin boats laden with stores, to which again were attached a brace or so of mules swimming in the water, would be swung across that still swift current, suspended from but one or two thin wires.

The speed of the crossing exceeded all hopes. It was accomplished in about forty-eight hours. From South Parte we marched, over a pass that was new to us, straight into Pete-jong. At the top of that pass facing

southwards we found a wall, which had obviously been built by the Tibetans in the belief that on our march upwards we would cross the ridge by this route. It was a well-conceived fortification, and might have given us considerable trouble.

From Parte Ferry to Gyantse we marched in two columns. Thinking the crossing of the ferry might occupy several days, and in order to be prepared for all emergencies such as any possible ebullitions of hostility that might delay our march, we had laid in at the ferry and the posts on the way to Gyantse a stock of supplies which now proved larger than our needs, while our spare transport was only sufficient to carry on a portion of the surplus.

I accompanied the second column and had the pleasant duty of making away with this surplus. To one whose purse has always been slender, and whose nature is correspondingly extravagant, there can be nothing more agreeable than to dispose in a free-handed way of large amounts of Govern-

ment property. One enjoys all the delights of extravagance with none of its bitter after-taste. Of course, even from the strictly economical view, it was far the best policy to make away with these surpluses where they stood. The total value of the stores so made away with, though amounting to a large sum, was far less than, for instance, would have been the cost of retaining the force in the country until they had consumed them.

The British troops were all with this column, but there were several native units as well. One arrived at a post and found it full of many good things that could not be carried on. Restrained only by fear of filling the troops to a tension beyond what the medical officers thought desirable, one accosted commanding officers, and asked with one's best shop-walker's manner what they would like to-day. A few hundredweight of jam and pickles would be doled out for the asking, or, in the case of native troops, similar quantities

of tea and ghi and goor. The coolis were my best customers. The amount of tea and goor they took away and consumed with benefit to themselves was surprising. They worked all the better for it and marched into Gyantse carrying record loads.

The stores still left over at each place were solemnly presented to the local peasants who came up, and, regarding the affair as a huge joke, went away laden with bundles selected at random from, as it were, a huge bran-pie. Rum was withheld from them, but I should have liked to see the effect of their consumption of some of the things they got, as, for instance, of an unsuspecting draught of neat lime-juice, or a mouthful of chillies.

So on we marched over that stiff pass into Pete-jong, along Lake Palti shining in this clear-set wintry weather with its true turquoise colours, past Nagartse and up through the barren gorge that leads to the summit of the Karo-Là, down the Karo-Là

regretfully, doubting whether we should ever reach such heights again, into the Rālung plain, and down the long glen to Gyantse.

Our appearance in those days was not spick and span. We were very much out at elbows, the breeches of both soldiers and followers were frequently patched with odd bits of Tibetan woollen cloth, or even in some cases with bits of the gunny of gunny bags. I have known the red cloth of the typical lama's robe adapted to these purposes. With wear it turns into a cherry colour. My own orderly, who was fitted out with a complete pair of continuations of this cloth, looked in the distance like a trooper of the 11th Hussars (the overalls of that regiment being famous for that colour).

More curious still were the additions to the wardrobe in the shape of blankets and sentries' cloaks, which we brought from Lhassa, the woollen goods of that town being warm and serviceable, but rather out-

landish. The sentries' cloaks were merely oblong pieces of cloth with a hole in the centre, through which the sentry put his head, and of all sorts of colours—quite enough in themselves to frighten the nocturnal miscreant.

But most curious sight of all, if one could have looked on from the outside, would have been the collection of dogs which we brought with us. The dog that Tommy had left at home was of course the familiar type of square-jowled sturdy monster, who, by a process of natural selection and survival of the fittest, has been evolved out of many types, and now rules supreme in cantonment barracks. His master at Lhassa had consoled himself with another sort, and it was a touching sight to see great bearded men sometimes leading, but as often as not carrying, on the march dainty little lap-dogs, of kinds that resembled the Pomeranian, the Skye terrier, or the King Charles' spaniel. One or two Tibetan mastiffs—more like huge

Welsh collies than mastiffs—also accompanied us.

"At Gyantse we were halted for a few days, upon one of which the G.O.C. held his farewell parade, making us a sympathetic speech which will be remembered by all of us. Then we marched past. My lot was to command a squad of veterans whose duties for years had been confined to the supply of the army. We got along somehow, more by innate intelligence than knowledge of drill, going through various giddy evolutions in no particular formation and by the shortest cut, and arriving at the saluting base aided only by the bump of locality. There of course we braced ourselves and marched past, and turned our eyes sharply to the right as though we had never left the barrack square.

From Gyantse onwards I was in the first column, and thus missed certain hardships. It was nice bracing weather. We had cool fine days, at night twenty degrees of frost and often biting cold winds that took the

skin off the nose and chapped the lips and the lobes of the ear, but were on the whole salubrious. The same weather was with us all the way, up through Kangma and the Red Idol gorge to Kalatso, past Dochen and into the Tuna plain, over the Tang-Là, into Phari and down through the Gautsa glens, where the pine-forests smelt of Indian hill stations, and into Chumbi. As we reached Chumbi the clouds were gathering.

That night, with the outer fly of my tent taken out of store and erected over me, I went to bed secure in its extra protection, thinking casually that it might perhaps rain in the night. In the early morning I was woken with a crash, and felt a great weight squeezing my whole body, but leaving my head clear. Striking a light I found the upright tent pole near my feet broken in two. Looking through a corner of the tent I saw the ground all covered with snow, and realised that the weight on my body was the snow that had accumulated on the tent, broken the tent pole, and fallen

upon me. It was six o'clock. My orderly and syce came to my rescue. They lifted the snow off me and took away my tent pole to a carpenter to get it mended, while in what space was still left within the tent I found I could still breathe, and so slept peacefully till in an hour my tent pole was brought back mended and the tent reconstructed, and I could get up in comfort.

I had had a very mild experience. Grief of a worse kind had been widespread through the night, many officers and men losing their only shelter irretrievably at two or three in the morning. The second column came in that afternoon rather worn and battered, and the third column—for from Gyantse we had become three—was snowed up for two nights at Phari after a terrible march over the Tang-Là from Tuna. Their eventual march into Chumbi was also a severe ordeal. At Chumbi it remained to await one's day of release. The snow delayed the passage of the troops hardly at all. Leaving Chumbi

in small detachments and using both the Jálap-Là and Natu-Là routes, they gradually disappeared. At length my own turn came. Leaving Chumbi one fine morning, and finding myself again a passenger, I hastened by double marches to India across the Natu-Là down to Gangtok, through Sikkim, and into Siliguri. Strange it was to think, as, after that last hot double march from Riang, one sat under the punkah in Siliguri refreshment room, drinking tumbler after tumbler of iced ginger-beer, that three days before one had pulled icicles from one's beard on the top of the Natu-Là.

Pleasant to get into the Darjiling mail that night and speed to Calcutta; pleasant to feel oneself wrapped in the civilisation of the Indian metropolis; pleasanter still to take train at Howrah, and be carried up country to the crisp cool autumn of the Panjab and to one's own fireside.

So the show was over—all over but for its memories, which for my own part were

mainly agreeable. As he lays those memories aside, the selfish soldier's wish can hardly be other than that on some convenient date in spring time not too many years distant, ere the person is too stout and the legs too stiff to relish those high passes, some truculent grand lama may necessitate and a kind Government organise another summer trip to Lhassa.

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